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# DOMINICAN MONASTIC SEARCH

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DOMINICAN MONASTIC SEARCH is published by the Conference of the Nuns of the Order of Preachers of the United States of America. The Conference is an organization of independent monasteries whose purpose is to foster the monastic contemplative life of the nuns in the spirit of Saint Dominic.

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"Mother of Contemplation"

Photo of ceramic by Brazilian  
artist, Claudio Pastro  
(The Dominican nuns in Brazil  
are asking him to design the  
chapel in their new monastery:  
"poor and beautiful.")





# ***TABLE OF CONTENTS***

Editorial . . . . .	1
Pilgrim Virgin, Pilgrim Church . . . . .	3
Sister Mary Emily, O.P. (Lufkin)	
"In the Name of....Sweet Mary" . . . . .	7
Sister Mary Jeremiah, O.P. (Lufkin)	
Courtyard Scene (Poem) . . . . .	14
Sister Mary Regina, O.P. (West Springfield)	
Mary in the Incarnation and the Signs of the Times . . . . .	15
Sister Virginia Mary, O.P. (Summit)	
Sign of Hope . . . . .	22
Sister M. Giuseppina, O.P. (Marino, Italy)	
The Rule of St. Augustine for Today . . . . .	27
Sister Maria Agnes, O.P. (Summit)	
We Hail Thee (Poem) . . . . .	37
Sister Mary Rose Dominic, O.P. (Summit)	
Poetry: Speech Framed for Contemplation . . . . .	38
Sister Mary Elizabeth, O.P. (Newark)	
The Sun (Poem). . . . .	55
Sister Mary Martin, O.P. (Summit)	
Address to the Presidents of the Federation of Spanish Dominican Nuns . .56	
Jean Jerome Hamer, O.P.	
First Glimpse of Mother Maria Teresa . . . . .	61
Sister Mary of the Holy Cross, O.P. (Buffalo)	
The First Constitutions of the Dominican Sisters of Montargis . . . . .	72
Raymond Creytens, O.P.	
BOOK REVIEW	
The Sweet Voice of the Turtledove - Sister M. Giuseppina, O.P. . . . .	89
Sister Mary Jeremiah, O.P. (Lufkin)	

## EDITORIAL

The Blessed Virgin Mary has held a prominent place in the theology and devotion of the Dominican Order since its foundation. One of the earliest expressions of this devotion was the Salve Regina sung in procession to her altar. This beautiful anthem has retained its place at the end of Night Prayer right up to the present, and it still has the power to draw fervor from the hearts of all Dominicans, as we ask Mary at the closing of each day to "show us the blessed fruit of your womb, Jesus." These few words epitomize our Dominican Marian theology and devotion: it is Mary, above all, who leads us into the mystery of Christ.

Pope John Paul II has recently explored this Marian theology at great length, in great depth, and with deep personal love in his latest encyclical Redemptoris Mater. In a concluding passage of the document the Pope tells us that his reason for proclaiming the present Marian Year is "to emphasize the special presence of the Mother of God in the mystery of Christ and his Church."

In order to honor this Marian Year we are dedicating this issue of DOMINICAN MONASTIC SEARCH, in part, to Marian themes. Our first article attempts to summarize Pope John Paul's encyclical in terms of the spiritual journey of Mary and of the Church, a journey leading us through Christ, in the Spirit, to the Father. In the second article we look at Marian devotion from a particularly Dominican perspective as it is found in the teaching of St. Catherine of Siena. Our third article explains, against the background of the two papal encyclicals Dives in Misericordia and Redemptoris Mater, the theme of the mercy of God revealed progressively in Holy Scripture and exemplified in the hearts of Jesus and Mary understood as special signs of God's mercy in today's world. There is an intervening poem which is replete with hidden Christological and Marian symbolism. Our final contribution on Mary, again from the Dominican perspective, is a translation of a chapter from a recent book on Dominican life by an Italian Dominican Nun.

The five remaining articles are concerned with a variety of topics. There is an exploration of the spirituality in the Rule of St. Augustine. This is followed by a description of the contemplative orientation underlying the poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins, some of whose poems are published for liturgical use in our present breviary. Then we look at two translations which are somewhat related in topic. The first is a very pertinent address given last year at a meeting of the presidents of the Spanish Federations of Dominican Nuns by Jerome Cardinal Hamer. The second is the preface and first chapter of a biographical sketch of Mother Teresa Maria of the monastery of Olmedo in Spain. Our concluding paper, a commentary on the Constitutions of Montargis (1250), is a translation from the French originally published in Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum in 1947, but of timely interest in view of the recent revision and promulgation of our Constitutions. Two more poems and a book review complete our presentation.

We hope that this 1987 issue of DMS is, at least in part, a small contribution in honor of the Marian Year, under the guidance of Pope John Paul II, with an implicit prayer to the Mother of God and our Mother to "show us the fruit of your womb, Jesus" during our present spiritual journey and at the end of our earthly exile.

Sister M. Catherine, O.P.  
Elmira



If through faith  
Mary became the bearer of the Son  
given to her by the Father  
through the power of the Holy Spirit  
while preserving her virginity intact,  
in that same faith  
she discovered and accepted  
the other dimension of motherhood  
revealed by Jesus  
during his messianic mission.

PILGRIM VIRGIN, PILGRIM CHURCH

Sister Mary Emily, O.P.  
Lufkin, TX

Pope John Paul II issued his sixth encyclical, Redemptoris Mater, on March 25, 1987, feast of the Annunciation. This extraordinary letter is heavily threaded with the concept of the pilgrim and the journey aspects of the Mother of the Redeemer and the Church.

In the introduction to this encyclical the Holy Father focuses attention on the Pauline, "fullness of time." (1.) This reference to one of the major pleroma passages in scripture has a definite bearing on his entire message. The Greek word plerom is translated as plenitude and fullness. (2.) This plenitude is contained in its fullness in the Redeemer. Christ, because of his plenitude of Godhead, has brought grace and salvation through his life, death and resurrection. Thus, pleroma is shared with us, not by nature as it is in Christ, but by participation in his fullness according to our response to this gift.

Through the conception and birth of Mary's son, the Incarnation, the "fullness of time" graces our world. This "fullness of time" is inaugurated by the coming of the Redeemer. Yet, Mary, the bright "morning Star" precedes the arrival of the Father's gift of plenitude in Christ. The Pope expresses it in this way:

For just as this star (Stella Matutina), together with the "dawn" precedes the rising of the Son, so Mary from the time of her Immaculate Conception preceded the coming of the Savior, the rising of the "Son of Justice" in the history of the human race. (3.)

So it is that Mary of Nazareth begins her pilgrimage in the fullness of her Son as a kind of forerunner, though certainly the grace of her Immaculate Conception and that of the Annunciation are ultimately dependent upon her Son from whom all plenitude is dispensed. Vatican II adds an additional nuance:

The Father of mercies willed that the consent of the predestined mother should precede the Incarnation, so that just as a woman contributed to death, so a woman should contribute to life. (4.)

It is precisely this "fullness of time", the coming of the Son of God, which designates "the hidden beginning of the Church's journey". (5.) Here too, Mary is a forerunner, since she goes before the people of God throughout Christian history as a model and guide. The Holy Father writes:

Strengthened by the presence of Christ, the Church journeys through time toward the consummation of the ages and goes to meet the Lord who comes. But on this journey...she (the Church) proceeds along the path already trodden by the Virgin Mary, who 'advanced in her union with her son unto the cross'.(6.)

Since Mary is to be model and guide to the Church in its journey to the kingdom, the Holy Father defines with clarity and precision Mary's fullness of grace, fullness of faith and fullness of motherhood.'

Mary is addressed by the angel at the annunciation as "full of grace". The Church has always interpreted this phrase literally. Mary, through a special and unique privilege from God, has been free and preserved from sin, both original and actual, from the moment of her conception. God performed this wonder because he foreknew her integrity and because he wanted the eternal Son of God, who is the "pure effusion of the glory of the Almighty"(7.), to be born of the sinless virgin of Nazareth. Thus the humble lowly maiden was filled with grace so that she might be prepared to be mother of the God Man in the "fullness of time". And as the Pope explains, this election was ordained by God before the creation of the world, because God has "blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places".(8.) The Holy Father elaborates:

This is a spiritual blessing which is meant for all peoples and which bears in itself fullness and universality ('every blessing').(9.)

We may rightly conclude that Mary is "full of grace" not only because of the dignity of her Son whom she bore, and the integrity that was hers, but also, this gift of "fullness of grace" was given her for "all people", and the effect extends over the entire horizon of salvation history and into eternity. It is through this history in time, and on into eternity that the pilgrim virgin of grace precedes the Church.

This gift of "fullness of grace" is bestowed on her through the power of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God, who empowers her with grace, sustains her in this grace throughout her journey to the fullness of her destiny and ours. In this, the Pope says, she "remains a sign of sure hope"(10), and with that reminder, we think again of the Pontiff's reference to Mary as "Morning Star". That star offers a sign of hope for the day to come.

Mary's journey in haste to Ain Karim, nestled in the mountains, "guides us in the footsteps" of our understanding of Mary, the pilgrim virgin. The Holy Father recalls to us the greeting of Elizabeth to her cousin Mary, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!".(11.). Then another heavy note is struck, "and blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord".(12.)

Both these texts reveal an essential Mariological content, namely the truth about Mary, who has become really present in the mystery of Christ precisely because she has believed.(13.)

Mary is the great woman of faith in the scriptures. In these same scriptures we see Abraham as the father of faith. Mary's role for those who believe the things revealed by God is kin to that of matriarch.

Mary's "obedience of faith" during the whole of her pilgrimage will show surprising similarities to the faith of Abraham. Just like the Patriarch of the people of God, so too Mary, during the pilgrimage of her filial and maternal fiat, "in hope believing against hope". Especially during certain stages of this journey the blessing granted to her "who believed" will be revealed with particular vividness. To believe means 'to abandon oneself' to the truth of the word of the living God.(14.)

Mary did abandon herself. She went from strength to strength in her "pilgrimage of faith": first at the annunciation, then in her visit to Elizabeth and her trips with Joseph and their child to Jerusalem for the purification ceremony and to observe Passover. In their flight into Egypt to save the life of the "King of the Jews", their son, Mary kept maturing in her faith. As her son "advances in wisdom and grace before God and man"(15.), to begin his "journey to Jerusalem", Mary also travels with him, all the way to the summit of the cross. The Pope expresses these thoughts succinctly:

If as "full of grace" Mary has been eternally present in the mystery of Christ, through faith she becomes a sharer in that mystery in very extension of her earthly journey. She "advanced in her pilgrimage of faith" and at the same time, in a discreet yet direct and effective way, she made present to humanity the mystery of Christ. And she still continues to do so. Through the mystery of Christ, she too is present within mankind. Thus through the mystery of the son the mystery of the Mother is also made clear.(16.)

Pope John Paul desires that we, along with John the disciple, hear Jesus say to us, "behold your mother". Before Mary became the physical mother of her son, she became spiritual mother by accepting him in her heart. In her journey of faith and grace Mary hears and heeds the word spoken to her. She "hears the word of God and keeps it in her heart" and ponders it day and night. She is like that biblical tree "planted near running water, that yields its fruit in due season".(17.) The fruit Mary yields is the fruit of her womb, Jesus. She experiences Motherhood completely, and she goes before us in complete openness to the Word.



Because of this unique affinity with the Word, the Pope highlights the events of the wedding feast at Cana of Galilee. Here Mary becomes a mediatrix in a natural way, though her son produces supernatural effects. It is natural for a mother who notices something her son can fix to approach him for the job. Mary, as a good mediatrix, turns to her son, Jesus, to inform him, "They have no wine".(18) The point here is not that Jesus worked a miracle, but that Mary his mother mediates between the wine stewards and her son. In like manner Mary mediates with him for the needs of her spiritual children in grace. She does this "not as an outsider, but in her position as Mother". And significantly, it is she who has once again traveled on before us in a particular capacity, this time in grace.

In the second major part of the encyclical Pope John Paul places the Mother of God at the center of the pilgrim Church in a different way. Instead of extolling her qualities and virtues specifically, he focuses on her assistance to the Church as the Mother who has gone before us into heaven. This assistance in glory has its roots in all the mysteries of Mary, with the event of Pentecost as the launching event, and the prelude. It is by reason of her personal graces and privileges that Mary stands out in high relief in the upper room with Peter and the apostles on that anointed day of Pentecost. "In the upper room Mary's journey meets the Church's journey of faith".(21)

She did not receive the apostolic mission given the apostles, but she was present as a witness to all the great events in the life of her son. She was a "unique witness to the mystery of Jesus, that mystery which before their eyes had been disclosed and confirmed in the cross and resurrection".(22.) The apostles, knowing of her "long journey through faith", found in her a support for their own. And Mary, "who figured profoundly in the history of salvation...summons the faithful to her son and his sacrifice and love for the Father".(23.)

It is precisely in this ecclesial journey or pilgrimage through space and time, and even more through the history of souls, that Mary is present as one who advanced on the pilgrimage of faith, sharing unlike any other creature in the mystery of Christ.(24.)

The faith of Mary, says the Holy Father, always precedes the "pilgrim people of God" down through the centuries. Thus we find the world-famous shrines of Marian devotion as an outstanding reminder to pilgrims of her maternal care and her desire to deepen their personal faith in God.

Ecumenism in our own day is prominent in the prayer and desire of the

pilgrim Church as we march forward into the future. Mary is a sign of hope for unity because of her "obedience of faith". At the present stage of her journey, therefore, the Church seeks to rediscover the unity of all who profess their faith in Christ in order to show obedience to her Lord, who prayed for this unity before his passion.(25.)



The Church has always modeled herself on Mary's journey. This is certainly true of our time as we stand on the threshold of the third millennium of Christianity. The Virgin full of grace ushers us into this new era in her Son, who is the way of grace and fullness for the pilgrim Church. We are reminded by the Second Vatican Council that the Queen of heaven is not unmindful of the trials and tribulations of our time, and that Mary's mediation continues in the history of the Church and the world.

...Mary by her maternal charity, cares for the brethren of her son who still journey on earth surrounded by dangers and difficulties, until they are led to their happy homeland.(26)

And so the encyclical ends; yet, like Christianity itself, its message cannot end. We are a pilgrim Church looking to the pilgrim virgin who goes before us. We have one calling and one hope from God, and we press forward in the direction God has called us to experience that plenitude as Mary experienced it in her son. We will fall short of what she experienced, but the grace that comes from him and is mediated through the Mother of the Redeemer will nevertheless be freely given to those who will reach out to the source of grace and share her experience proportionately.

The Pope, in his concern for all the Churches and for all the peoples of the world, explains a way to move toward this future of fullness of grace.

Mary is deeply rooted in humanity's history, in man's eternal vocation according to the providential plan which God has made for all eternity.(27.)

#### NOTES:

1. Gal. 4:4
2. Robert C. Broderick,  
The Catholic Encyclopedia,  
(Our Sunday Visitor, Inc.,  
Huntington, Indiana, 700),  
p. 477.
3. Pope John Paul II  
Redemptoris Mater, No. 3
4. *ibid*, No. 1
5. Lumen Gentium, No. 56
6. *ibid*, 58
7. Wis. 7:25
8. Eph. 1:3
9. Redemptoris Mater, No. 8
10. *ibid*, No. 11
11. cf. Lk 1:40-42
12. Lk. 1:45
13. Redemptoris Mater, No. 12
14. *ibid*, No. 14
15. Lk. 2:52
16. Redemptoris Mater, No. 19
17. Ps. 1:3
18. Jn. 2:3
19. Redemptoris Mater, No. 21
20. *ibid*, No. 23
21. *ibid*, no. 26
22. *ibid* (same No.)
23. Lumen Gentium, No. 65
24. Redemptoris Mater, No. 25
25. *ibid*, No. 35
26. Lumen Gentium, No. 65
27. Redemptoris Mater, No. 62

"IN THE NAME OF...SWEET MARY"

Sister Mary Jeremiah, OP  
Lufkin, Texas

Catherine of Siena is generally considered a predominantly Christological saint. Jesus Christ penetrates her every thought, word and action. But the corollary, the less emphasized complement to her total dedication to Jesus is her unfailing devotion to Mary his Mother. Catherine's commitment to Mary is like a deep underground spring which flows silently, yet continually, to nourish and vivify her spiritual development.

Mother of the Redeemer, the recent and magnificent encyclical of Pope John Paul II, could well be an elaboration of Catherine's understanding of Mary. Catherine sees her in relation to the great mysteries of Christ's conception, birth, passion, death and resurrection. It is especially in her participation in the sacrifice of Calvary that Mary reveals her greatness and maternal relationship to the redeemed as well as to the Redeemer.

Time and space do not permit a thorough examination of Catherine's experiences and writings regarding Our Lady, an analysis of which would fill a book. Blessed Raymond's Life of the saint recounts many stories including the observation that the most constant words from Catherine's lips as a child were the "Hail Mary." Her consecration at the age of seven was entrusted to Mary, Queen of Virgins. Catherine always considered the guidance and friendship of Raymond of Capua as a special gift from her heavenly Mother.

Catherine speaks of Mary several times in the Dialogue and even begins the book by recalling that it was at a Mass on "Mary's day" that the eternal Father responded to her four petitions for mercy. Mary, as a solicitous mother, knows how to gift her children. Not only did she give Raymond to Catherine, but in obedience to the Father, she gave Dominic to the world to spread the Word of truth.

/Dominic/ was a light that I offered the world through Mary and sent into the mystic body of holy Church as an uprooter of heresies. Why did I say 'through Mary'? Because Mary gave him the habit - a task my goodness entrusted to her.

Mary is the bait God uses to save souls and show them his mercy. God the Father assures Catherine that no one will be lost who loves and reverences Mary, the gentle Mother of the only-begotten Son.

Mary is mentioned in a number of Catherine's Prayers. One of the most powerful is Prayer XI in which Catherine addresses Mary of the Feast

of the Annunciation, 1379. Our Doctor of the Church proclaims Mary as an "alter Christus" by applying to her images she usually associates with Christ, for example, "peaceful sea", "fire", "temple of the Trinity", "bait", "book" and "bearer of mercy". This prayer is a catherinian litany of marian devotion. At the same time it expounds the doctrinal aspect of Mary's role in the Incarnation and Redemption.

These are merely brief references; the reader can consult the Life, Dialogue and Prayers for more examples and further insights. In the remaining pages, I would like to present several of Catherine's Letters because they are not readily available in English. Almost 400 letters are extant. All but five of these begin with the words, "In the name of Jesus Christ crucified and of sweet Mary," This alone speaks of Catherine's abiding love for the Mother who is never far from her Son.

Letter 144 to Monna Pavola of Fiesole contains a short summary of Catherine's understanding of Mary in the economy of salvation. Monna Pavola was a venerated abbess who had been the spiritual director of many fervent souls, including the saintly Giovanni Columbini, the founder of an Order near Siena. Catherine begins this letter by sharing her contemplative love for Mary expressed in beautiful imagery. She then concludes by mentioning some practical things to do.

Her theme comprises the two-fold mystery of Incarnation and Redemption. We sometimes separate these two mysteries of faith, yet Catherine sees them as one reality, the complete expression of God's love for sinners. Catherine always places Mary in a collaborative role next to her Son, and the Mother and Son are never in conflict. The Mother is always subordinate to her divine Son, yet she is also free in fulfilling her unique role in the work of salvation.

Catherine loves the image of Mary as the fertile soil, the good field in which the seed of the Word of God is sown. The Word is grafted into our humanity through Mary. The warmth of the sun, the Spirit-Love burning within Mary's heart, enables the seed to germinate and bring forth its flower and fruit. "O blessed and sweet Mary, you have given us the flower of sweet Jesus."<sup>3</sup> Then immediately Catherine sees the Redemption as the full-flowering of the Incarnation. She says that this flower comes to full term and brings forth its fruit when it is placed "on the wood of the most holy cross."<sup>4</sup>

When Christ was born, the shell surrounding the seed-kernel remained in the earth, in Mary. Catherine says this shell was the will of the Son of God. Through the imagery of gardening, Catherine proclaims that the wills of Jesus and Mary are one. This explains Mary's role, her effectiveness and the honor due her. She bears within her heart the same thirst for the honor of God and the salvation of souls that impelled Jesus to run, like a lover, to the disgraceful death on the cross. Mary was so united with Jesus that, if there had been no other way, she herself would have put her Son on the cross to fulfill the Father's will.

Because of Mary's absolute union with the will of God there is no need for us to worry that she will be an obstacle to or distraction from Jesus. On the contrary, Mary is the perfect disciple, showing us the way to Jesus, helping us to follow him. Mary leads us to Jesus. She desires only the full accomplishment of the divine will.

Catherine continues this Letter 144 by pointing out that Mary is not just the Mother of Jesus confined to an historical time and place, but she continues to exercise her maternal mediation throughout the course of time and in every human soul. Catherine's words are as valid today as we approach the end of the second millennium as they were in July, 1378.

Keep in mind, O my dearest Sister, and never let it leave your heart and memory and soul, that you and all your daughters have been offered and given to Mary. Therefore, beg her to present you as a gift to sweet Jesus, her Son. She will do it as a sweet and kind mother, and a mother of mercy. Do not be ungrateful or unappreciative.<sup>5</sup>

Every human being redeemed by the blood of Christ was given to Mary at the cross: "Behold, your Child"... "Behold, your Mother" (Jn. 19:26-27). Therefore, each person belongs to Mary and can rely upon her motherly intercession. This belonging to her is intensified by the profession of religious vows or by a personal consecration. Catherine is writing to religious women and wants them to rejoice always in the remembrance of Mary's intercession for them. Mary is continually offering her children to God, standing beside them during their personal "Calvaries" to unite them to the pierced Heart of her Son.

Catherine's vision of Mary's role is primarily one of maternal mediation and co-redemption, consequently, Catherine's favorite title of Our Lady is Mother of Mercy. She is the Mother of Mercy in two ways. First, she is the true mother of Jesus Christ, mercy incarnate. It is precisely the crucified Christ who is the sign par excellence of God's mercy and love.<sup>6</sup> Second, Mary is a merciful mother because this best describes the qualities of her own immaculate heart and mind.

Union with Mary leads to full availability for the service of God and neighbor. Thus, Catherine concludes her letter to Abbess Monna Pavola by encouraging her (and all subsequent readers) to struggle daily to acquire virtue and to be ready to serve the Holy Father in whatever way he needs, even to the point of "dying for the holy Faith."<sup>7</sup>

Catherine did not confine sharing the fruits of her contemplation with similarly devout people. Without apologizing for her beliefs, she wrote the same Gospel message to believers and non-believers alike. The two following letters are addressed to a Jew and a prostitute respectively. In both cases she uses Mary as the primary example, or to use Catherine's words, "bait", to draw them to Jesus Christ. These two letters are special treasures because they reveal Catherine's undaunted and tender concern for



those not yet united with Jesus and his Mother.

Letter 15 is addressed to Consiglio, a Jewish usurer from Padua. His work had brought him to Siena where Catherine probably met him. In this relatively short letter, Catherine mentions Mary by name five times. Why? Perhaps it is the ancient image of the "daughter of Zion" or the importance of the mother in a Jewish family. I believe it is also a simple example to illustrate the phrase "to Jesus through Mary."

Her greeting is more elaborate, more jubilant than usual. She replaces "In the name of Jesus Christ crucified and of sweet Mary" with "Praised be Jesus Christ crucified, son of the glorious Virgin Mary." Again, unlike her practice in other letters, Catherine uses a similar expression of praise to close the letter. "Praised be Christ crucified, and his sweet Mother the glorious Virgin Mother holy Mary." Thus, Catherine opens and closes this message to her Jewish friend with phrases reminiscent of the ancient Jewish blessing, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel..." For Catherine, Mary is the most exalted woman of Israel, the fulfillment of the Virgin-Mother imagery of the Daughter of Zion.

The Mother and Son are inseparable. Mary brings the long-awaited Messiah to her people. Through Catherine, Mary pleads for her Jewish people. Catherine, for her part, cannot seem to refer enough to Mary, including her is almost every mention of Christ. "Most beloved and dearest brother redeemed like myself by the precious blood of the Son of God, I unworthy Catherine, write to you, constrained by Christ crucified and by his sweet Mother Mary. I beg you...to receive the Grace of holy baptism."<sup>8</sup>

Although Consiglio is not a Christian, and we do not know for certain if he ever became one, Catherine seeks to woo him to love Christ by using expressions of warm solidarity. "O dearest brother in Christ Jesus open your eyes..." "How sweet and kind is our God..." Catherine does not consider herself better than this non-Christian as indicated in the greeting recorded in the previous paragraph. On the contrary, she knows Christ has united himself to all of humankind through his Incarnation and freely offers his redemptive blood to everyone. Catherine seeks to lead this Jew from the "law of Moses founded on Justice...to the new law given by Christ crucified, the gospel life founded on love and mercy."<sup>9</sup>

Mary is the spouse of the Holy Spirit. They are united forever to bring forth the life of Christ in souls. Where the Spirit is, there is Mary with her motherly concern. Where Mary is, there is the Spirit, "the Lord and giver of life." Catherine unites the Spirit and Mary in their desire to bring eternal life to Consiglio. "Make no more resistance to the Holy Spirit who calls you and do not despise the love that Mary has for you, nor the tears and prayers that have been offered for you."<sup>10</sup> A remarkably beautiful and moving statement! Mary loves this person. She loves every person before he or she has accepted Christ. Like the Trinity to whom Mary is so closely united, she takes the initiative in loving. Truly a mother, she is the first to love the unborn child long before the infant is aware of his or her mother. Together with the Holy Spirit, Mary



has conceived a tremendous love for Consiglio and labors to bring forth the image of her Son in his soul.

Catherine is a faithful disciple of Jesus and Mary and so there is no one excluded from her loving care. A man once came to Catherine brokenhearted by the wayward life of his sister who had become an "outcast" of society. Some scholars speculate that he had heard of Catherine's success in converting Niccolò di Tuldo before his execution, and so had recourse to Catherine to convert his sister from a life of sin. You may remember that Catherine preceded Niccolò to the place of execution and prayed for mercy through Mary. The saint recalls that she called on Mary because "I wanted this grace, that at the moment /of death/ she would give him light and peace of heart, and that I would see him reach his goal."<sup>11</sup>

Catherine takes upon herself the man's sorrow and writes his sister, a prostitute in Perugia. Catherine is very blunt in making the woman face her situation. "It seems that you act like a pig wallowing in the mire for you are covered with filthy mud. You have made yourself a servant and slave of sin. You have taken the devil for your lord, and serve him day and night."<sup>12</sup> Our mystic continues with other images to try to awaken the prostitute's conscience, then she directs her words to the most tender emotions of the latter's heart. Everyone yearns for love and Catherine offers the woman two models: the Blessed Mother and St. Mary Magdalen.

Run to that sweet Mary who is mother of  
compassion and of mercy. She will lead  
you into the presence of her Son. On your  
behalf she will show him the breast with  
which she nursed him and move him to bend  
down to show you mercy. You, as a daughter  
and servant redeemed by the blood, will  
then enter the wounds of the Son of God.  
There you will find such an ineffable  
charity that it will consume and burn up  
all your miseries and defects.<sup>13</sup>

Catherine is confident that Mary's motherly intercession will be victorious for anyone who goes to Jesus through Mary. Jesus longs to show his mercy to the world and he refuses his mother nothing. Mary does not draw people to herself, but she leads them to Jesus and she especially brings them to his pierced heart. Catherine knows this to be true from her own experience. On at least one occasion, Mary had obtained graces for her from Christ's side.<sup>14</sup>

Catherine ends her strong, yet tender, appeal to the prostitute of Perugia in a manner different from all her other letters. After her usual closing of "Sweet Jesus, Jesus Love", she adds the delicate words, "Mary sweet Mother." It seems she desires to place this unfortunate woman once more into the loving care of the Immaculate Heart of her Merciful Mother. Both this letter and the one to Consiglio reveal Catherine's absolute confidence in Mary to embrace those who appear to be the farthest away and

to carry them to the loving heart of her Son.

Blessed Raymond of Capua was famous for his devotion to Our Lady and wrote a popular commentary of the "Magnificat." Some scholars believe that it was actually St. Catherine who fostered his devotion and inspired him to write about Mary. Raymond was not ashamed to acknowledge Catherine as his spiritual "mama." One of the most noted characteristics of her personality was her spiritual motherhood. In fact, this quality was so outstanding and unusual that it is almost unparalleled in the history of spirituality.

She had an extraordinary gift to captivate the hearts of people of every social strata by her spiritual presence and lead them to Christ. When this young illiterate woman called prelates and professors, nobles and common people her "beloved children," they spontaneously responded "dearest mama." Her disciples would even call themselves "caterinati" meaning "en-catherined," one charmed or possessed by Catherine. Scholars have sought to explain her spiritual power and influence, but most are forced to admit it is a supernatural reality emanating from her profound spiritual life.

In the light of the present work, I would like to suggest that her vast and fruitful spiritual motherhood was a consequence of her deep union with Mary, the spiritual Mother of Heaven and Earth.

There seem to be three stages in Catherine's devotion to Mary:  
1) early childhood when she concentrated on vocal prayers and explicit acts of devotion; 2) the time of seclusion in her cell and early apostolate when she meditated upon the mysteries of faith and began her works of service; 3) her mystical life during the last years of her life in which union was so deep as to surpass description. The more profound Catherine's union with Mary becomes the more interior and subtle we find it.

Pope Paul VI in proclaiming Catherine of Siena a Doctor of the Church called her, "the mystic of the Incarnate Word...the mystic of the Mystical Body of Christ, that is, of the Church."<sup>15</sup> These very phrases find their fullest expression in Mary, Mother of the Word and Mother of the Church.

It was St. Catherine's profound love for Mary which opened her to the transforming action of the Holy Spirit to become such an extraordinary spiritual mother and totally faithful spouse of Jesus Christ.

NOTES

<sup>1</sup>St. Catherine of Siena, The Dialogue, trans. Sr. Suzanne Noffke, OP (New York: Paulist Press, 1980), chapter 158, p. 337.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., cf. chapter 139.

<sup>3</sup>St. Catherine of Siena, Le Lettere, collected and notes by Niccolò Tommasèo, ed. by Piero Misciatelli in six volumes, (Florence: C/E Giunti - G. Barbèra, 1940), Letter 144, Vol. IV, p. 282.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 283.

<sup>6</sup>Cf., Pope John Paul II, Dives in Misericordia.

<sup>7</sup>Op. Cit. L 144-IV-285.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., L 15-II-49.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 50.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>Letter 273-IV-176.

<sup>12</sup>Letter 276-IV-182.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 184.

<sup>14</sup>Cf., Johannes Jorgensen, Saint Catherine of Siena, trans. Ingeborg Lund (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., Inc. 1938) pp. 31-32.

<sup>15</sup>Pope Paul VI, "Proclamation for a Doctor of the Church," L'Osservatore Romano, English edition, 42(133) October ,5 1970, pp. 6 & 7.

COURTYARD SCENE

Amidst our stony limestone walls  
The winter lumbers in.  
Announced by lightning near the dawn  
While snowfall feathers thin.

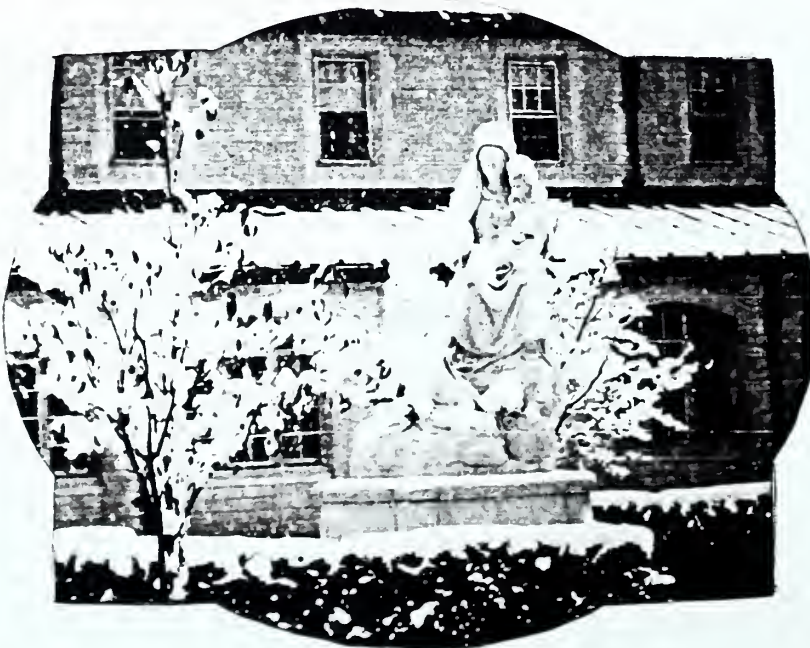
A breathless sight, so rich to see  
As roofs mount high with white,  
Yet still and peaceful like a sleep  
As dawn breathes forth from night.

The frosty winds swirl round and round  
Our Lady's shrine set deep;  
A paradox, amidst the calm  
Some swirling spirits' sweep.

The little trees blow with the blow  
And humbly lend their twigs  
To dress in lacy holiday,  
To sway to nature's jig.

See what I have done for you  
Within the night's slow watch  
The gift of dawn, white tumbled break  
A vision near, while yet far off.

Sister Mary Regina, O.P.  
West Springfield, Mass.





MARY IN THE INCARNATION AND THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES

Sister Virginia Mary, O. P.  
SUMMIT

(This was originally a talk given at Solemn Chapter for Feast of the Incarnation of the Lord, March, 1987. It has been expanded to include themes especially relevant to the Marian Year.)

"I find myself so unworthy and ill-equipped to speak of this mystery that I don't know where to begin or where to end. If men did not require some stimulation to live a good life, it would be better to adore this mystery in silence, for it almost seems a lessening of such great mysteries to try to describe them in human language." These are not my own words but those of our Brother in St. Dominic, Fray Louis of Granada. (1) He expressed well the inadequacy of human language for explaining divine mysteries, so my own attempt will be replete with such limitations. I would like to call this simply a sharing on the two most important aspects of this mystery of the Incarnation and the special meaning they have for our own day.

First, we know that the motive of the Incarnation was that of LOVE and MERCY and that this is what characterized our Savior's whole life and mission. Scripture abounds with passages which reveal these attributes of God from the beginning of Genesis when the Savior was promised, to Exodus, "when after the people had revolted and broken the first covenant in the desert, God had revealed Himself to Moses, passing before Him and crying, 'the Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness'. (Exodus 34:6) This was an initial revelation of the meaning of the mysterious name of YAHWEH, the aspect of His nature which He chose to make known first to man, the impression which He wished to be most deeply engraved upon man's heart." (2) When the people turned away again He sent the prophets to call them back,

...and in their preaching they associate mercy with eloquent images of God's love; for the Lord loves Israel with a love of unparalleled preference and choice, a love like that of a husband. For this reason in His mercy He forgives her sins including infidelity and betrayal. The Lord saw the wretched state of His enslaved people, and hearing their cry and seeing their affliction, He determined to set them free. In this saving act of the Lord the prophet could see both His love and compassion at work. This, then, is the basis for the security of the people as a whole and each of its members: the divine mercy upon which human beings can call in every adversity. (3)

Isaiah 42:1-4, the first "Song of the Servant", describes the Lord's messenger who will fulfill His plan for the earth, a mysterious figure, whom most modern exegetes consider to



be an individual: "Behold My servant whom I uphold...I have put My spirit upon him...he will bring forth justice to the nations. He will not cry out or lift up his voice... a bruised reed he will not break and a dimly burning wick he will not quench..." In other words, he will bring the mercy and gentleness of God. These are the qualities of his essential nature which God had revealed. In the New Testament Luke is the evangelist of God's mercy and he alone gives us the inaugural sermon of Jesus in the synagogue at Nazareth, making this the keynote of Jesus' whole mission: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me... He has anointed me to preach good news to the poor... to proclaim release to the captives... recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." (4) He sought out the sinners, the outcasts, the seemingly hopeless. Even though He showed His just anger and uttered harsh words at times, all was the overflow of his love and mercy in order to bring his people to repentance and to new life in God.

In his encyclical, Dives in Misericordia, Pope John Paul II writes:

In and through Christ, then, God also becomes especially visible in His mercy. Not only does He speak of it and explain it with the aid of comparisons and parables but, above all, He embodies and personifies it. He himself is, in a sense, the mercy of God. Those, therefore, who look for and find this quality in Him have God made visible to them in a special way as the Father who is 'rich in mercy'. What is special about true mercy is that it discerns, fosters and elicits good from all forms of evil in the world and in human beings. Thus, understood, mercy is the central teaching in Christ's message and the power that explains His work.(5)

The Pope shows how the outlook of many today, more than in the past, reveals resistance to a God of mercy, an attempt to deny him and to remove him from their hearts and from their lives. In these times this mystery of the God of mercy becomes a special appeal to the Church. People are in need of it even if at times they do not realize it. (6)

The second aspect of this mystery of the Incarnation is the heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Spiritual writers have always said that she was prepared for this very special moment through her great integrity: her "purity, faith, her openness in every way to the power of the Holy Spirit working in her, an openness to the Word of God through reading, listening, observing, and above all, her great charity." (7) Mary was one of the 'Poor of Yahweh', that faithful remnant in Israel which grew out of the Old Testament experience of God's action towards his people and the way he had taught them to respond. The attitude and response called for was one of humility, obedient surrender, faith and trust. Mary personified these virtues in an outstanding way, and God had decreed to show her his favor in a manner far beyond human comprehension.

In Mary God always took the initiative, and she was able to believe with a faith similar to that of Abraham that out of her inviolate virginity he would bring into the world the Word Incarnate who is Life itself. Mary is the one whom God sets before us to be our model, our guide, and especially our Mother. She is closer to us than we realize. She who was and is the Holy Spirit's perfect instrument to bring about the reign of peace and love of Christ (8) desires nothing more than to co-operate with Him in forming within each an "Incarnation of the Word--to be another humanity wherein he may renew his mystery", as Blessed Elizabeth of the Trinity so eloquently expresses it. Mary was the one on whom Blessed Elizabeth gazed in order to live her religious life effectively by meditation on and assimilation of the Divine Word. "She is the living incarnation of a loving faith and she seeks to conform to herself the soul that contemplates the divine source in order to transmit to her and through her to the entire world the beneficent graces of salvation." (9)

At the Annunciation Mary was told by the angel that her child would be called Son of the Most High because of the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit. As a true contemplative adored and obeyed. She opened her heart to the Spirit and conceived her Son and also his mystical members. She is the woman in whom the life of the Trinity is carried on, the woman who, through her existence, compels the divine mystery of the three Countenances to shine forth and be manifest. After Christ, Mary is the contemplative par-excellence. She is the

...paradigm of apostolic activity in the Mystical Body, blending contemplation and action in authentic prayer without favoring one over the other, so that the two were expressions of the one same love in her heart. They are so united in her that they constitute one exemplary reality for anyone who, like her, is able to be present to the world with all its problems by the simple fact of being completely possessed by God. (10)

What is being asked of us today? We know very well that God has specific designs upon the world. To quote Pope Paul VI: "...so great are the needs and perils of the present age, so vast the horizon of mankind drawn toward world co-existence and powerless to achieve it, that there is no salvation for it except in a new outpouring of the Gift of God--the Creating Spirit, to renew the face of the earth. (11)

We have now entered upon a special Marian Year and Pope John Paul II has issued a new encyclical, Redemptoris Mater, in which he beautifully points out that, "from the very first moment the Church 'looked at' Mary through Jesus just as she 'looked at' Jesus through Mary." (12) An official comment made when the encyclical was introduced expressed the reason for it in this way: the Pope sees the Marian Year as not just another Jubilee Year in her honor; that far from being a mere sentimental devotion it is meant to direct the Church as a dynamic impulse toward the future with, in, and through Mary, Mother of the Redeemer, Mother of humankind and Mediatrix of divine grace, whose intercession is special and extraordinary. He wishes to interpret the signs of the times in the light of faith and offer

directives for the Church and for humanity. He links together two scriptural passages which seem to have little in common: chapter 3 of Genesis, (the Proto-evangelium), and chapter 12 of Revelation. This last book speaks expressly of the "sign of the Woman" who, at a determined moment of history, will rise up above it, to reconcile heaven and earth from that moment onwards. This sign of the woman is the sign of hope. Within our present historical moment the "sign of the Woman" is the essential "sign of the time". On the path indicated by this sign in the person of Mary we proceed in the footsteps of hope towards Christ, the Lord of history. (13)

This Marian Pope asks us to deepen our awareness of her presence in the mystery of Christ and of the Church as Vatican Council II teaches, for by our knowledge of her and of the role she plays we will be more disposed to allow the Holy Spirit to prepare us for the eschatological Day. The life and work of Jesus Christ and his mother are indissolubly bound together. (14) We find all this confirmed in the statements of his predecessor, Pope Paul VI, especially in his Apostolic Exhortation, Marialis Cultus:

The development of devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, which We desire, is an indication of the Church's genuine piety. This devotion fits...into the only worship that is rightly called "Christian", because it takes its origin and effectiveness from Christ, finds its complete expression in Christ and leads through Christ in the Spirit to the Father. (15)

Pope John Paul II has entrusted nations everywhere to the Immaculate Heart of Mary to further the reign of Christ, and he prayed:

Let there be revealed once more in the history of the world the infinite saving power of the redemption: the power of merciful love. May it put a stop to evil. May it transform consciences. May your Immaculate Heart reveal for all the light of hope. (16)

The world needs to know more than ever that its God is a God of love and mercy. This is his message for it today as he makes clear. We are constantly exhorted to take refuge in His Heart, "for the Church most fully proclaims and venerates God's mercy when she does so, and when we approach Christ in the mystery of His Heart we are able to contemplate most fully this central reality which is at the same time especially accessible at the human level: I mean the revelation of the Father's merciful love which it was the main purpose of the Son in His Messianic mission to bring." The Pope also reminds us that when Christ revealed the loving mercy of God, He required his followers to make love and mercy the inspiring force in their lives. (17) This is the power humanity needs and He alone is its source. "Come to me with Your sweet power, Your power that knows no eventide." (18)

Near the end of Redemptor Hominis the Holy Father writes:

Prayer above all is needed for the Church's success and I ask



that it be intense, with Mary and the disciples in the Upper Room in Jerusalem, awaiting the new Advent, the new Pentecost. (19) The new Advent is here--the "Great Marian Advent" being proclaimed in the Church to the year 2000. (20) Each day God becomes Incarnate for us. "Be born in us, Incarnate Word..." (Caryll Houselander) To quote John Paul II again,

...As the Church carries on the magnificent work of implementing the Second Vatican Council--a work in which we rightly see a new phase in the self-realization of the Church in response to the needs of our time--she must be constantly guided by the consciousness that in this work she may not turn in upon herself. I raise my voice in prayer that at this point in history, the love which is in the Father may once again be revealed and may, through the power of the Son and the Holy Spirit, manifest its presence in the contemporary world and prove mightier than any evil, sin, and death. This I pray for through my intercession of her who still proclaims 'mercy...from age to age.' (21)

#### NOTES

- (1) Summa of the Christian Life, Vol. 3, Trans. by Jordan Aumann, O.P. (St. Louis: Herder & Herder, 1954-58) See Chapter 5, "A Work of Mercy and Love."
- (2) Henry Wansbrough, Scripture for Meditation. "The Incarnation" (New York: Alba House 1975)
- (3) John Paul II, Encyclical Letter Dives in Misericordia. (English Edition of L'Osservatore Romano, December 9, 1980), Section III, 4
- (4) Isaiah 61: 1-2. This paragraph is based on Wansbrough.
- (5) Dives in Misericordia, Section I, 2: IV, 6
- (6) Same. Section I, 2
- (7) Laurence Justinian, St., Sermon 8, Feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary.
- (8) This is the teaching especially of Sts. Louis de Montfort and Maximilian Kolbe. See True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin, (Bayshore, N.Y., Montfort Publications 1985) and H. Manteau-Bonamy, Immaculate Conception and the Holy Spirit, (Libertyville, Illinois: Franciscan Marytown Press 1977.) St. Maximilian Kolbe's basic discovery was: "Mary the Immaculata is the chief visible manifestation of the Holy Spirit's presence in the Church, and the universal instrument of the Spirit's mission to unite all men to Christ our Savior." This book

is the best source in English so far on the Saint's teaching.

- (9) Luigi Borriello, O.C.D., Spiritual Doctrine of Blessed Elizabeth of the Trinity. Trans. by Jordan Aumann, O.P. (New York: Alba House, 1986)
- (10) Same
- (11) Gaudete in Domino, VII, 1975. This was also quoted in a most interesting book, The Spirit and the Bride Say Come, (AMI Press, Asbury, N.J., 1981), by Gerald J. Farrell, M.M., and George W. Kosicki, C.S.B. It deals with the working of the Spirit in Mary and her promise of the triumph of her Immaculate Heart and why they believe it will be accomplished shortly.
- (12) Section II, 26
- (13) It is interesting to note that these themes in Genesis and Revelation on the battle between the Woman and the forces of evil have surfaced in a particularly notable way in the last century. She came with a saving message in her appearances to St. Catherine Labouré in 1830 and gave her the miraculous medal which contained the Immaculate Conception ejaculation (reminiscent of Genesis 3). Thus she preceded the most powerful force of evil to come upon the modern world: Marxism expressed in atheistic communism which was inaugurated in 1848 with the "Communist Manifesto." She warned humanity of its sins in 1849 at LaSalette. In 1854 the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception was proclaimed. In 1858 she declared at Lourdes, "I am the Immaculate Conception." Then followed a series of notable apparitions: Pontmain (1871), Pellevoisin (1876), Knock (1879), Fatima (1917) in the year of the Russian Revolution. Four days after the miracle of October 13, St. Maximilian Kolbe founded his "Knights of the Immaculata" to combat the forces of evil under her patronage in order to bring about the reign of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. In 1932-3 she came to Beauregard, to Pannex (1933). In 1945 Pope Pius XII proclaimed our Lady of Guadalupe "Patroness of the Americas". She appeared here as the "Immaculate Conception and the Woman Clothed with the Sun." In 1947 came the appearance at Tre-Fontanne, Italy, where she said, "I am the Virgin of Revelation." Thousands of Christians and Moslems watched the apparitions at Zeitoun, Cairo, in 1968. There is great evidence to support the visions at Garabandal (1961), Nicaragua, (1981), and Medjugorje, (1981 to the present), but they need further processing by Church authorities. She has also inspired the founding of the "Legion of Mary", the "Blue Army", and other organizations to work for her cause.
- (14) "Since devotion to the Mother of God is part of our Faith and not merely a pious addition, it follows that her name should be constantly on our lips and love of her consistently in our hearts. At the same time that devotion should be authentic, devoid of pious exaggeration and theologically based." (James Cardinal Freeman, Archbishop of Sydney, at the Marion Congress in Sydney, Sept., 1976).



- (15) Pope Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation Marialis Cultus, Feb. 2, 1974. Introduction
- (16) John Paul II, Act of Entrustment of the World to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, March 25, 1984
- (17) Dives in Misericordia, Sections VII, 3; II, 3
- (18) John Paul II, Homily of the Installation Mass, (English Edition of L'Osservatore Romano, October, 1978).
- (19) A reference to the Holy Father's frequent Marian talks.
- (20) Mission of the Immaculata Bulletin, (Libertyville, Illinois: Franciscan Marytown Press, October, 1986). The Holy Father recently said, "the Marian Year is being celebrated during the period of preparation of the Church and of humanity for the year 2000 from the birth of Christ. If the first coming was preceded by Advent, now too we feel the need for a new advent. If during the first Advent there shone on the horizon of Salvation history the Morning Star which precedes the rising of the Sun of Justice and Grace—Mary, before the coming of Christ—it must now shine once again...(Homily given at Mass at the Shrine of Jasna Góra in Poland, June, 1987)
- (21) Dives in Misericordia, Section VIII, 15

SIGN OF HOPE \*

Sr. M. Giuseppina, OP  
Holy Rosary Monastery  
Marino, Italy

"In his eyes I have found peace." (Sg of Sg 8:10b)

"The Church's reflection today on the mystery of Christ and on her own nature has led her to find at the root of the former and as a culmination of the latter the same figure of a Woman: the Virgin Mary, the Mother of Christ and the Mother of the Church...As in every home, the figure of a Woman, who in a hidden manner and in a spirit of service watches over the Family and carefully looks after it until the glorious day of the Lord." (Paul VI, Marialis Cultis, Introduction)

Here is the figure of a woman, very humble and silent, who does not seem to have accomplished more than what is common to every woman: to be a mother. This person is with Christ at the center of the Church, at the center of a history marked by God's presence and the history of human salvation.

Catherine spoke of this woman, a young mother from the common people: "Mary, redemptrix of the human race, because you bore in your flesh the Word who redeemed the world...Mary, the fruitful earth,...you bore the fire hidden and veiled under the ashes of your humanity."

These are surely bold and unique images, but ones that reveal a reality from which every person draws life. It is a reality which no one can fail to consider, much less we Dominicans who spread abroad the light that comes from the "fire" which is Christ. We are announcers of the Word who is Christ.

The necessary presence of Mary is a presence of hope, not a project of vague aspirations, but of life. It is a lived and living presence of gentle strength. Peguy writes of this difficult virtue with poetic imagery: "Eternity in the hollow of your hand." Eternity is the ultimate and definitive beatitude, the indestructible vision and possession of God. Hope is the eternity of a saved humanity reconciled with God by Christ. This eternity was offered to human beings from the hands of Mary. Her motherly hands had carried Christ, the Mediator, the Savior.

The first sign of hope, the first announcement of a new humanity, is Mary the Mother. And she, with Christ, is the distinctive sign of the Dominican Family.

When we are more distanced from the juridical expression of "Order", we will reacquire more fully our true and primitive dimension of Family. We will find ourselves necessarily gathered around this gentle figure of the young woman who is the Mother of Christ. We are consecrated to the Word of God so that he might be pondered, praised and proclaimed.

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\*This article is Chapter 28 of The Sweet Call of the Turtledove (Naples: Editrice Domenicana Italiana, 1987). and translated by Sister Mary Jefemiah, O.P. (Lufkin)  
See book review on p. 73

This is neither a novelty nor a fad. It is what was living in the spirit of St. Dominic. Therefore, it is at the source of our life as a Family that, from the fullness of the contemplation of Christ-Truth, we find the strength for the apostolate, for evangelization.

An ancient document (The Nine Ways of Prayer of St. Dominic) relates that when St. Dominic wanted to teach his brethren to pray he sometimes told them: "The Magi, these three holy kings, found the Infant with Mary, his Mother...Now, we too, must find the God-Man with Mary." The Word of God, the reason for our being preachers, is Christ still living and active in history and in the life of every person. His presence is living as the presence of His Mother is living and active. This feminine presence was so dear to St. Dominic that he wanted to perpetuate it in time. He associated the hidden, humble, silent, but attentive and loving life of the nuns to the work of preaching. Like Mary they keep vigil, like Mary they pray, like Mary they intercede, like Mary they are a sign of hope because they are a proclamation of salvation.

This presence cannot be missing from the Dominican Family. It is not accidental, added by chance. It is a necessity of life just as a mother is necessary in the life of every human family, just as a Mother was mysteriously necessary in the life of Christ the Savior. We who are already collaborating in the work of the apostles of our time make the spirit of this Mother relive in the spirit of service, vigilant love, goodness that follows and protects at every step, that shares every pain, every difficulty as well as every success. As Mary accepted Christ who is the gift of God (and she did not stop at this), so we, although in the monastery, are not just to accept him but to make a gift of ourselves at the same time, just as Mary made a gift of herself to God, to Christ, to all people. The way of new hope opened by Mary bears the sign of the Cross. She continued on to the Cross in silence, offering her Son, the dearest and most intimate part of herself, to the Father.

Enclosure, silence, poverty, suffering peacefully accepted, joyously welcomed in body as well as in spirit: these are essential parts of our Marian and Dominican life as nuns.

The penitential moment of our life as nuns and as Dominicans goes beyond a "practice of mortification". It is lived in the certainty of faith.

In the introduction to our book of Constitutions we read: "Look at the Cross of Christ, which one of our first friars called the Book of Charity, in it are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. It is the Cross that introduces us into the mystery of God in which one never ceases to search and which is the source of our apostolate. It is the contemplation of the Cross of Christ that will make you authentic Dominican nuns."

Will we be there alone?

"Near the cross was the Mother of Jesus. There is our place, in the act of interceding for the salvation of all."

With Mary. It is important for us nuns to-be-with-Mary. Peguy again writes of her (I don't believe the citation will be annoying):

To her who intercedes,  
The only one who can speak with the authority of a mother...  
To her who is infinitely rich.  
Because she is also infinitely poor...  
To her who is infinitely great.  
Because she is infinitely small.  
Infinitely humble.  
A young mother  
To her who is all Greatness and all Faith.  
Because she is also all Charity.  
To her who is all Faith and all Charity.  
Because she is also all HOPE.  
(the portico of the mystery of the second virtue,  
pp. 46-47)

She taught us this boundless hope on Calvary when she offered with Christ the "evening sacrifice so that from then on no one would miss the last call of evening, and each sheep would find the gate of the sheepfold, each person the Father's house".

Our evening song addressed to her who is "our hope" is not only a nice Dominican tradition, a peaceful way to close the day. It is an authentic act of faith in her, because she always stirs up hope, because she always intercedes for us. Because even if it is night, she helps us to guide people to the Father. She,

the Mother of the Good Shepherd...  
To her who intercedes  
Because she is blessed among women.  
(Ibid., pp. 50-51)

Yes, truly

"blessed is she who believed":

These words,

spoken by Elizabeth after the Annunciation,

here at the foot of the Cross

seem to re-echo with supreme eloquence...

From the Cross,

that is to say from the very heart

of the mystery of Redemption,

there radiates and spreads out

the prospect of that blessing of faith.

REDEMPTORIS MATER, #20





THE RULE OF SAINT AUGUSTINE FOR TODAY

Sister Maria Agnes, O.P.  
Summit

AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO: A Biographical Sketch

Every student of Church history knows Augustine of Hippo, the greatest of the fifth century founders of Christian Europe. It was Augustine who made a definitive synthesis of ancient culture, Platonic philosophy and Christianity. This was to become normative for the whole Middle Ages and, in many ways, for the Church of all ages.

Augustine was student, teacher, scholar, theologian, writer, preacher, bishop, administrator, contemplative, monastic founder and saint. His life covers that period when the old Greco-Roman world was crumbling before the onslaught of barbarians. This is well described in his philosophical work, The City of God, by which he traces God's ruling hand in human history. Augustine was born in Tagaste (now Souk-Ahras) in North Africa (the modern Algeria) on November 13, 354. By that time, the Church was spreading among the pagans. Augustine was not baptized as a child and he did not become an active Christian during his youth. His father, Patricius Hercules, was a pagan. Augustine's mother, Monica, was instrumental in the conversion of both father and son to Christianity. The moving account of Augustine's conversion is recorded in his Confessions.

North Africa was then a western province of the old Roman Empire. Hippo (the modern Bone), was just across the Mediterranean from Rome. Augustine grew up, lived and died in a Latin culture. At the age of 12, he studied grammar and literature in Madaura, a town south of Tagaste. He studied rhetoric in Carthage (now Tunis), at the age of 17. For nine years in Carthage, Augustine became involved in Manicheism. (1)

In 383, Augustine went to Milan after a brief sojourn in Rome. In Milan, he taught rhetoric and there met a group of scholars who introduced him to Platonic philosophy. Milan was the bishopric of Ambrose who baptized Augustine on April 14, 387.

Augustine returned to Africa in 388, became a priest in 391 and then bishop of Hippo from 395 until the time of his death. Administration, ecclesiastical discipline and religious controversies made heavy demands on his time as bishop. The Church of Roman Africa had a troubled history from the very beginning. There were Roman persecutions in the second and third centuries, Donatism in the fourth, and Pelagianism in the fifth century. The Arian heresy was brought to Africa by the Vandals who came from Spain in the fifth century. (2)

Augustine died before the siege of Hippo ended fatally, on August 28, 430.

### HIS MONASTIC VISION

Augustine had great influence on monasticism. First of all, the Sacred Scriptures formed his life of prayer, study, writing and preaching. There was the passion for truth in his intellect, enduring and practical love in his heart. For Augustine, the heart is God's altar and the source of wholeness in a person. (3) It is also a battlefield where God's mysterious actions meet with the human person's free decisions. The heart determines the human personality. Augustine's spirituality was rooted in love, united to faith and hope and perfected in wisdom (2 Tim 1:13). In the realm of theology, Augustine drew on Neoplatonic philosophy in order to explain the gradual movement of the human person from the material to the spiritual, and from the temporal to the eternal. He gave the same formation to his followers.

Before his conversion, Augustine, in the company of his mother and some friends, made a quasi-monastic retreat in Cassiciacum, near Milan, during the part of the year 386 and until his baptism in 387. They formed one household and shared their possessions in common. After Monica's death, Augustine returned to Africa and established his first monastery in the parental home. For three years he and his followers lived for God alone in prayer, fasting and good works, while meditating on the Scriptures day and night. He founded another monastery in Hippo after his priestly ordination. As bishop, he established a monastery of clerics in his episcopal residence. This house became a formation center for monks and bishops. The monastic practices in Augustine's monasteries were the traditional ones: silence, communal and personal prayer, humility, penance, poverty, celibacy, obedience and service, but the emphasis was always on unity and love. (4)

### LETTER 211: A MESSAGE ANCIENT AND NEW

In 423, Augustine was asked to serve as peacemaker for a convent of nuns which he had founded in Hippo, and over which his sister had been superior for almost 25 years. After her death, conflict developed between the nuns and the new superior. Augustine wrote them a letter in which he recommended, above all things, a shared vision, focused on God. The unique value of this letter lies in the realism and wisdom with which Augustine considered the human condition through faith, hope and love.

Augustine gives the message of Jesus in its full biblical sense. All the precepts in this letter are resonant of Luke 6:27, "To you who are listening to me, I say, love!"; and the brief commentary on John 13:35, "By this all men will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another". In Jesus, the human person loves God and is loved by him. Love of God is inseparable from love of neighbor. In loving the other, one loves the Lord himself since all together form one body, Christ. This love expresses itself in humility, poverty, service, mercy, forgiveness, authority, obedience, and the multiple nuances of friendship like trust, welcome, gentleness, respect and generosity. (5) Love, by its very nature, is totally demanding.

No Christian community ever reaches perfection here on earth. In the gospels we can learn with what kindness Jesus admonished his disciples in their jealousies, quarrels, prejudices and wrong ideas on who he is. Pride, greed, envy, anger and disobedience can disfigure the beauty of community life, but the gospel proclaims that love has the first and the last word. For Augustine, the monastic life is already giving witness to this quest as the nuns journey to God in oneness of mind and heart; it is precisely for this reason that they have come to live together. (6)

The message of Letter 211 is ancient and is rooted in Scripture. It is new and has living permanence because the spirit of Jesus renews and re-creates new hearts (2 Cor 3:6). Letter 211 was to become the basis for the famous Rule of St. Augustine. (7)

### THE RULE IN DOMINICAN MONASTIC LIFE

St. Dominic and the early friars chose the Rule of St. Augustine for their life and mission. To this Rule, the Dominicans added particular customs and observances. The Dominican nuns, founded in 1206, adopted the same Rule, then already revised, in 1257. The particular charism of Dominican monasticism is formulated in the Book of the Constitutions of the Nuns of the Order of Preachers. (8)

The Rule is divided into eight short chapters. In this paper, four basic themes will be drawn up. We shall leave out those elements that are limited by a particular cultural context, and select those that are rooted in Scripture and have perennial value. The Rule offers a message to a world that is caught up in the pursuit of affluence, sex and power. This message is proclaimed in silence through the monastic vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. The daily rhythm of monastic life - liturgical and private prayer, solitude and community, enclosure and hospitality, silence and chapter, study and prayerful reading, work and leisure - points to the primacy and unity of God.

#### 1 VOLUNTARY POVERTY AND COMMON LIFE

"Among you there can be no question of personal property. Rather, take care that you share everything in common...Those who owned possessions in the world should readily agree that, from the moment they enter religious life, these things become the property of the community." (9)

Love begins with sharing what one has: material goods, productive skills, knowledge and talents. Non-ownership and the sharing of goods are the first steps in cleansing the inside of the cup (Mt 23:36). It is an outward sign of the unity in love which is described in Acts 4:32. Voluntary poverty is the freedom from the domination of created things. It is also the art of using things in a spirit of joy and tranquillity, for what is joy if not the giving up of all that one has in exchange for that pearl of great price (Mt 19:10-11)?



A nun, however, has given nothing to God and to the community unless she has given herself. When St. Paul writes of the generosity of the Christians in Macedonia, he observed that "first they gave themselves to the Lord" (2Cor 8:5). Poverty involves interdependence and service of one another. It also means experiencing need and limitation and allowing oneself to be carried by others. (10)

The contemplative finds Christ hidden in her daily chores as well as in special projects that demand intellectual culture. In poverty of heart she seeks Christ everywhere, like the bride in the Song of Songs, "I found him whom my soul loves" (3:4). In work, the spiritual is perceived in poverty, humility and love after the example of Christ who said, "As you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me" (Mt 25:40). In her daily work, therefore, the nun is imaging the poor Christ (Mt 13:55). Although Jesus warns us against too much anxiety about productivity and the consumer mentality (Mt 6:25-34), he has appreciation and love for human work. Jesus sees in every type of work an aspect of the human person's likeness to God (Jn 15:1). Augustine and other monastic writers have pointed out that it is better for monks and nuns to earn their livelihood by their labors and thus share the lot of the poor rather than wholly depend on alms and donations. To be fully supported by public alms belong to the feeble and disabled.

Over and above these considerations, the primacy of the human person over material goods is the consistent teaching of the gospel and the Church. The nun must be made to understand that in her daily work, she is earning her keep. This awareness is extinguished when a person is made to feel that she is a mere instrument of production. (11) The intention behind all this is that no one in the monastery shall seek her own advantage in work. Everything is to be done for the common good. When hopes, efforts and goals are shared, work brings unity of mind and heart. (12)

Humility is linked with poverty. The humble person recognizes the fact that she has received all from God (1 Cor 4:7). The person who truly seeks God is both poor and humble (Zeph 2:3). Pride, the source of all sins, is deeply entrenched in human nature. Pride, according to Augustine, militates against all good works; it demeans the giver and the gift loses its value. (13) The most generous deed is not always a sign of true Christian presence. If a person gives away all that she has and distributes her property, but has no love, her deed has no value (1 Cor 13:3). A person is neither her possessions nor her generous act but her true self, her being.

## 2      THE GIFT OF CONSECRATED CHASTITY

The first book in the Bible gives the blessing for fertility (Gen 1:28) as well as the charter on marriage (Gen 2:24). The marriage blessing was not revoked after the Fall. Human salvation was promised through childbirth. This was fulfilled in Mary, the perfect virgin who was so completely mother that the virgin Messiah was born of her alone. Before Mary's time, however, Hosea, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, David and Solomon developed the theme of spiritual marriage between God and Israel, and then between God and the human soul. The fruits of chaste love are even more manifest in the gospel. An example

of this is Anna who consecrated the chastity of her widowhood in prayer, fasting and vigils for the sake of Jesus (Lk 2:36-37). Christ himself gave celibate love a deeper meaning, "Not all men can receive this precept, but only those to whom it is given" (Mt 19:11-12).

The celibate, then, is called by name. Consecrated chastity is both a gift and a renunciation. Its true motive is to image Christ by belonging completely to him. With Christ, the religious will not be lonely for the Father is also with her (Jn 16:32). She has the fellowship and love of her Sisters in the community. Through friendship and reciprocal love, the nuns grow in fidelity to this love for Christ. (14)

Augustine, who had painfully experienced in himself the demands and the limitations of human nature could thus give this practical advice: "You cannot say that your inner attitude is good if with your eyes you desire to possess a man, for the eye is the herald of the heart". Elsewhere, Augustine refines this point: "Look upon the beauty of your lover...let him who was fastened to the cross be securely fastened to your hearts". (15) This choice certainly involves a sacrifice which affects the very depths of the human personality. For this reason, commitment by vows is to be guided by prudence, maturity and above all, by faith. Here is Augustine again: "God does not command the impossible but tells us to do what we can, and pray for what we are not able, and he will help us to accomplish it". God alone is the master of his gifts. No one else more than Augustine has taught the importance of humility in the faithful keeping of the vow. He recommends prayer "lest this gift be plundered by pride". (16)

The Rule also exhorts with respect to modesty in dress and behaviour. The nuns are not to be concerned with externals in order to attract attention. However, no one can underestimate the significance of clothes in terms of necessity, modesty, protection, hygiene, femininity and identity value for religious women. (17) Clothing protects the private and interior life of a person (Gen 3:21). The Dominican religious habit expresses the type of life lived in the Church and in the community (Dt 21:10-14) as well as the history of that life. It is also a visible sign of consecration to Christ.

Augustine gives practical advice on the care and discipline of the body. (18) In Scripture, the flesh signifies the human person in a state of finiteness and fragility (Jn 1:14). When regarded as the dominating principle of life, the flesh can tyrannize the person with its prerogatives and demands (Rom 7:25). It is in Christ and with Christ alone that the human person can conquer sin and death with that very flesh (Rom 8:3).

The body in itself is the visible expression of the human person, a member of Christ (Rom 6:15), the temple of the Holy Spirit (Rom 6:19) and will rise again to immortality (1 Cor 6:14). For these reasons, the religious is destined to give glory to God by means of her bodiliness through prayer, fasting and good works in chaste love (Rom 6:20). These aspects of her identification with Christ are at the heart of her vow of chastity.

3      AUTHORITY AND OBEDIENCE

Authority is fundamental in religious life. Authority comes from God, and it is given in view of the common good (Rom 13:1). The Prioress, first among equals, is at once leader, friend and companion. The Rule presses this point, "Your superior must not think herself fortunate in having power over you but in the love with which she shall serve you". (19) This is an echo of Paul's teaching: "We are gentle among you, like a nurse taking care of her children. So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of Christ but also our own self because you have become very dear to us" (1 Thess 2:7-8).

Unity depends on the quality of leadership and on the Prioress' own loving obedience to Christ. The Prioress devotes herself to the Sisters in order that they in turn might be able to give themselves wholly to Christ, to the Church and to the Order in a life of contemplation. Both she who commands and she who obeys are following Christ, in the context of dialogue coming from the same source, God's will (Jn 4:34). The Prioress and the Sisters meet regularly for discussion, discernment and decision. The Prioress, who ordinarily presides at these meetings, unifies the insights and opinions of the Sisters before making a decision. She, being the least of all, bears the whole burden of the group's unified action when she makes the final decision. The Sisters, therefore, owe their Prioress respect and loving obedience because of the great responsibility entrusted to her. (20)

The Prioress herself should give example of fidelity to the ideals of Dominican contemplative life (Titus 2:7). She should counsel and direct those who violate these ideals, and the Sisters must be docile to prudent and wholesome direction. The right motive for correction is compassion for the sinner and the imperfect. The ultimate persuasion lies in the love of Christ, because he alone can comfort the human heart and confirm it in every good work. (21)

Christ is not only the Lord to whom obedience is due; he is also the Son who obeys his Father and by his obedience redeems the world (Jn 4:34). Christ obeyed his Father by submitting to Mary and Joseph, to the spiritual and civil leaders and the circumstances of his earthly life. Christ is the example of the religious who vows obedience to God; "If you would be my disciple, deny yourself, take up your cross and follow me" (Mk 8:34; Lk 9:23).

Hebrews 13:17 is the typical text on obedience to superiors; "Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls as men who will have to give account. Let them do this joyfully, and not sadly, for that would be of no advantage to you". Without faith and love, obedience is a dead weight. The obedience of Jesus enables the religious to find the will of the Father in the depths of her heart, in Sacred Scripture, the Rule and Constitutions, through her superiors, the community and in human events. (22) Through obedience the religious surrenders to the community her exclusive claim on self. She is freed from inner compulsions by yielding to the judgment of another or of others.



The Rule also describes the field of tension between danger and authority; "The higher the position a person holds, the greater the danger she is in". Obedience, therefore, is an act of love for oneself and an act of mercy towards the superior. Authority and obedience go hand in hand in the context of faith and mutual love. (23)

#### 4 PRAYER AND COMMUNITY

"Persevere faithfully in prayer at the hours and times appointed". Two of the four marks of the early Church bore on fidelity to prayer. "They devoted themselves to the Apostles' teachings and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers". (24) The Apostles also prayed at the specified times, namely, the sixth and ninth hours.

The psalms were prayed and lived by Jesus. Anyone who is formed by the praying of the psalms will receive the true good from God, and with that good, she receives God himself. The Rule states this meaningfully; "When you pray to God in psalms and songs, the words spoken by your lips should also be alive in your hearts". (25) The monastic community is also a eucharistic community which meets daily to celebrate, to share the one cup and the one bread that forms the members into one body. (26)

Much of the nun's prayer, however, is experienced in solitude, after the example of Jesus who frequently went out into quiet places to pray to the Father in his heart. Personal prayer is not an isolated experience. The content of all prayer is a love relationship with a person who was, who is and who will always be faithful, the God of love. In prayer, the nun puts her desire before God (Ps 3:9). Desire itself is prayer, says St. Augustine, and if desire is continuous, the prayer becomes unceasing. (27) The leitmotif of the nun's prayer is rooted in diverse situations of human life. The contemplative considers the purpose of God's plan, his kingdom, and the fulfillment of his will. A contemplative's own inner search for God must coincide with the world's search for peace, justice and love. Through her intercession, the nun enters into human history while her whole being is poised toward eternity. (28)

Living attitudes of prayer come from the heart. In the heart, all counterfeits are unmasked. The contemplative risks her heart to meet the radical demands of community life (Jer 30:21). Prayer is united to mercy and forgiveness. One must be able to say that she forgives from the heart whenever she prays the Our Father. (29) Fasting, also joined to prayer, is an act of humility before God. True fasting is the fasting of faith, the absence of the beloved and the ceaseless search for him (Song of Songs 5:6-8). Scripture also says that the Christian must bear in his own body the pains and sufferings of Christ and thus give witness to his life. The person who fasts does not put her trust on the flesh but on Christ's passion, death and resurrection. Like prayer, fasting is inseparable from caring and sharing. There is no denying the fact that the community and the world outside give the social dimension for experiencing God in one's personal prayer. Active works of love like almsgiving are a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to God (Col 3:23-24). Through this sacrifice, the world becomes part of the nuns' unbroken prayer (I Thess 5:17).



The final challenge of the Rule is to live out the monastic life faithfully. A closing remark on fidelity can be drawn from Augustine's Sermon on I John 9.9. He links the desire for spiritual beauty with the joy of contemplative and lived prayer. We shall come to possess spiritual beauty by loving Christ who surpasses everyone in beauty. In her life, the nun is imaging Christ, who, for the sake of others became a man of sorrows, without looks of beauty to attract human eyes (Is 53:2-3). Likewise, the religious shall come to possess beauty by fidelity to him because love is the beauty of the soul. Augustine, therefore, urges the consecrated religious: "Walk confidently in Christ, walk, do not stumble, do not fall, do not look back, do not stop on the way, do not take another path".

#### NOTES

- (1) The Manicheans were followers of Manes, a Persian (third century A.D.), who taught a religion which claimed two supreme deities, the god of good and the god of evil, in radical opposition to each other.
- (2) Donatism was a schism in the North African Church based on the belief that sacraments conferred by unworthy ministers are invalid. Pelagianism held that original sin was not transmitted through Adam and that personal salvation is possible through human effort alone. The Arian heresy claimed that the Son of God was not of the same nature as God the Father, which means that Jesus Christ is not truly God.
- (3) The City of God, 10.3
- (4) Confessions, 6.14; Possidius, Life of St. Augustine, Bishop, 3.5,11; Augustine, Sermon 355; See Pierre Mandonnet, St. Dominic and His Work, p. 198f.
- (5) Echoes of Mk 28:33; Mt 18:35; 25:40; Jn 17:21; Rom 12:5-10; Gal 5:15; Eph 4:1-6; I Cor 13:1-13
- (6) Rule, I.1
- (7) Mandonnet, pp. 195-290
- (8) See Simon Tugwell, Early Dominicans, pp. 456-465
- (9) Rule, I.3 & 4; cf. 2 Cor 8:9; Mt 8:20; See Adaptation and Renewal of Religious Life, 13

- (10) Rule, V
- (11) John Paul II, On Human Work, 71
- (12) Rule, V.2; See Augustine, On the Manual Labor of Monks, 25.32
- (13) Rule, I.7; cf. John Cassian, Institutes. IV.35
- (14) Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, 42
- (15) Rule, IV.3-5; Augustine, On Holy Virginity, 16.55
- (16) Of Nature and Grace, 43.50; On Holy Virginity, 43.51
- (17) Rule, IV.1-3
- (18) Rule, III.1
- (19) Rule, VII.3; A paraphrase of Lk 23;25-26 and of Mt 25;28;  
cf. Gal 5;13
- (20) Rule, VII.4
- (21) Rule, IV.10; cf. 2 Thess 2:17
- (22) Echoes of Phil 2:5-8; cf. 2 Cor 8:9; See Dogmatic Constitution  
on the Church, 42; Also Adaptation and Renewal of Religious Life, 14
- (23) Rule, VII.4; See the text alluded to in Sir 30:24
- (24) Rule, II.1; The typical texts are in Acts 2:14, 42, 46; 4:24; 10:9;  
Col 4:2
- (25) Rule, II.3; cf. Mt 26:30
- (26) Cf. I Cor 10:16-17; See Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, 12
- (27) Sermon 80.7
- (28) See the text alluded to in Mt 9:35-38
- (29) Rule, VI.1 & 2; an echo of Wis 12:19

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WE HAIL THEE

We hail thee on this joyous day,  
Oh Mary, flower of Israel,  
On which the Word of God took flesh,  
And came within thy womb to dwell.

We greet thee in thy setting forth,  
Thy cousin Elizabeth to greet;  
How fair thy youthful virgin form,  
Thy lightsome step, thy hastening feet.

Thou bearest on thy joyful way,  
The Savior blest, Immanuel,  
Whose advent brings redemption's day,  
And springtide unto Israel.

The earth in festive robe adorned,  
Rejoicing greets her hidden Lord,  
By whom the lot of man forlorn,  
To primal grace shall be restored.

Elizabeth now hears thy voice,  
And by the Spirit's light divine,  
Proclaims anew thy blessedness:  
The grace and glory which are thine.

When lo! her child as yet unborn,  
Reveals the Bridegroom's presence nigh:  
John leaps within his mother's womb,  
To greet the Son of God most high.

He is himself the herald sent,  
This very Bridegroom to proclaim,  
And now, with bonds of nature rent,  
Still voiceless, he tells forth His name.

And then, thy heart like tuneful lyre,  
Breaks forth in strains of sweetest song;  
Enkindled by the Spirit's fire  
It echoes through the ages long.

We too, this canticle shall sing,  
To magnify the Lord with thee;  
To whom alone be glory given,  
Both now and in eternity.



POETRY: SPEECH FRAMED FOR CONTEMPLATION

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Incredible as it sounds, some two thousand classified articles and books have been devoted to the poet Gerard Manley Hopkins and his work.<sup>1</sup> Why, then, am I daring to add to this formidable corpus? All these learned folk had something to say, some new light to shed on this remarkable man, whereas I, a recent convert to Hopkinsianism have nothing new to contribute. In fact, it is not my aim to be original, but only to introduce the poet's work to those who have not yet come across it. I have acquired information which I long to share with others, in order to bring them also into the orbit of this great spiritual poet, whose genius has been slowly, but surely, coming to the fore. "Hopkins' position as a major figure in English literature seems secure."<sup>2</sup> declares the Catholic Encyclopedia, a sober witness, not given to hyperbole.

Gerard's output was comparatively small, but the depth, intensity and richness of his work, especially his later work, brings him into the class of Milton and Shakespeare, according to some:

His necessarily circumscribed experience in religious life enabled him to reach and express a unique Catholic and overwhelming vision of God, and of creatures in relation to God, that greater poets cannot match. <sup>3</sup>

I hope, within the limits of this article, to explain briefly some of the characteristics of style that render him a somewhat difficult poet to understand at first sight. Then I hope to divide his poetry into sections, corresponding to the various periods in his life, showing the influences brought to bear on him at these times as they reveal themselves in his work. And finally, I will try to explain in some measure the seven Hopkinsian poems printed in our breviaries, appendix 4. Not all our libraries are equipped with the complete edition of the poems, but all have breviaries. As far as possible, I will let Gerard speak for himself. His own explanations need no commentary.

Rhymes and Chimes

Explanations of technicalities are generally tedious. But since we want to get full enjoyment from and thorough understanding of this poet, we have to take a look at certain elements in his style that might otherwise be daunting.

In the first place, Gerard is known for what he called 'sprung rhythm'. What is this?

The conventional, common rhythm for conventional, common poets is measured, or scanned, by 'feet' of two or three syllables, with the stress on the first syllable:

Then my heart with pleasure fills  
And dances with the daffodils. (Wordsworth. The Daffodils.)

(two syllables: one strong and one weak)

Just for a handful of silver he left us,  
Just for a riband to stick in his coat. (Browning. The Lost Leader.)  
(three syllables: one strong and one weak)

For the most part these rhythms are mixed, and this conventional method was the way Gerard usually wrote in his early days, that is, until 1875, the year of new development. After his long self-imposed silence, he burst forth into his masterpiece, 'The Wreck of the Deutschland', in the new sprung rhythm. What had happened? He tells us himself:

I had long had haunting my ear the echo of a new rhythm which I now realised on paper. To speak shortly, it consists in scanning by accents or stresses alone, without any account of the number of syllables, so that a foot may be one strong syllable or it may be many light and one strong. I do not say the idea is altogether new...but no one has professedly used it and made it the principle throughout, that I know of. 4

It is the nearest to the rhythm of prose, that is, the native and natural rhythm of speech, the least forced, most rhetorical and emphatic of all possible rhythms, combining as it seems to me ... markedness of rhythm and naturalness of expression. 5

An attentive reading aloud of the following will make this clearer:

Thou mastering me  
God! giver of breath and bread;  
World's strand, sway of the sea;  
Lord of living and dead;  
Thou hast bound bones and veins in me, fastened me flesh  
And after almost unmade, what with dread,  
Thy doing: and dost thou touch me afresh?  
Once again I feel thy finger and I find thee.  
WD Stanza 1

We are listening to a creature crying passionately to God in suffering. Putting it in another way we could say that Gerard's poetry

...is based on speech rhythms rather than on written forms, capturing the sound as the ear hears words, more than the eye responding to the printed word. 6

A further individual mark of Gerard's poetry derives from his study of the Welsh bards of antiquity. Not for nothing had he learned the difficult Welsh language. He was intrigued by the word sounds, the 'chimes' achieved by these ancient masters. He studied their techniques, or rather, series of techniques, and it was thus that he discovered methods of forming speech-sounds. Gerard describes his discovery thus:

...certain chimes suggested by the Welsh poetry I had been reading...and a great many more oddnesses that could not but dismay an editor's eye. 7

These chimes consisted largely of internal rhyming, or rhyming within the lines of verse, also alliteration of consonants, often combined with the former:

For I greet him the days I meet him, and bless when I understand. WD  
(Internal rhyming)  
And I fled with a fling of the heart to the heart of the host. WD  
(Alliteration)

For how to the heart's cheering  
The down-dugged ground-hugged grey  
hovers off... WD 26 (Both)  
(Dawn begins to break after a terrible night)

Stroke and stress that stars and storms deliver  
That guilt is hushed by, hearts are flushed by and melt. WD 6  
(Adversity purifies the soul) (Both)

Another 'oddity' is the way Gerard piled up words to stress an idea, as we see here in The Golden Echo:

...O why are we so  
haggard at the heart, so care-coiled, care-killed, so fagged,  
so fashed, so cogged, so cumbered,  
When the thing we freely forfeit is kept with fonder care.

It sometimes happens, too, that a line is 'rove over', that is, the line is concluded on the subsequent line;

And what is Farth's eye, tongue, or heart else, where  
Else but in dear and dogged man?  
Ribblesdale

Gerard was always seeking for just the right word. If he could not find it he would resort to dialect words, unfamiliar words, new compounds strange to the ear and even words of his own fabrication. This has led readers to interpret his meaning in various ways. His verse cannot be tripped lightly off the tongue, still less can it be glanced through by the eyes. It needs to be thought about, prayed about. What is the poet saying? What is the Spirit saying to me, to the world, through him? Here is an example of the theological depths he can reach in a few words:

Now burn, new-born to the world,  
Double-natured name,  
The heaven-flung, heart-fleshed, maiden-furled  
Miracle-in-Mary-of- flame,  
Mid-numbered he in Three of the thunder throne! WD 34

So much for our all too brief survey of the techniques of his verse, and the origin of that musical quality of his poems to which his soi-disant 'oddities' contribute. Now let us look at two words that he himself coined and which are important for a deeper understanding of his thought. These words are 'inscape' and 'instress'. There are many definitions of these two terms and these vary according to the philosophical leanings of the definer. But they are not merely philosophical terms.

(They) are relevant as religious concepts as well, for they suggest the modes in which the divine presence can be sensed. 8

### Inscape

For Gerard, everything had an individuality of its own, in and through which God's presence could be discovered:

(Inscape) is a distinctive character (almost a 'personality') given by the Creator to a particular species of rock, tree or animal. Each separate species, through its inscape, reflects some fractional part of God's all-



inclusive perfection. 9

"All the world is full of inscape,"<sup>10</sup> Gerard says in his Journal. Inscape is discovery of God in all things. This is not limited to nature, but can also be experienced in a piece of music, a work of art, a situation, or even changing patterns such as cloud formations (about which Gerard wrote a good deal). Any created process can reveal the hidden Presence. As a practical example of inscape, Gerard confided to his Journal:

One day when the bluebells were in bloom, I wrote the following: I do not think I have ever seen anything more beautiful than the bluebell I have been looking at. I know the beauty of the Lord by it. Its inscape is mixed of strength and grace. (1870) 11

In 1873 we find this lament:

The ash tree growing in the corner of the garden was felled. It was lopped first: I heard the sound and looking out and seeing it maimed, there came at that moment a great pang and I wished to die and not see the inscapes of the world destroyed any more. 12

In the same Journal in 1874, we read:

As we drove home the stars came out thick: I leaned back to look at them, and my heart, opening more than usual, praised our Lord, to whom, and in whom all that beauty comes home. 13

### Instress

Instress is precisely what happens when Gerard experiences inscape. A relationship is established between him and the object. His mourning for the felled tree is genuine. It arises from a sensitivity to the death of this living thing. There is a communication between himself and the tree, a power which moves him profoundly.

A good glossary of Hopkinsian words describes instress as 'the forceful impression made on a beholder by the inner energies of a thing's being.'<sup>14</sup> A good summing up of all this is contained in the following:

By virtue of inscape and instress, things can be said to have meaning and value, and so they can remind everyone of the goodness of God. They reveal to us a universe laden with meaning. 15

Nature was a sacramental to Gerard.

### THE POETRY OF GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS

#### General Remarks

I It might seem from the foregoing that Gerard's poetic vision was an unclouded one, in which nature was an inexhaustible source of continuous revelation of God. This was not so. Gerard was sensitively aware of evil in the world. He confronted it daily during his pastoral experience among the immigrants in the slums of Liverpool and Glasgow. Evil lurks in the heart of humankind. This truth, however, drew Gerard to what he already knew was the key to the spiritual life: sacrifice, especially the sacrifice of obedience. Herein Jesus was his model. Nowhere does this appear so strongly as in his reluctance to publish his work. He never wished for praise or fame. None of his poems were published in his lifetime, apart from one or two little



pieces that appeared in the Month, the Jesuit periodical of the English Province. When a well-meaning friend offered to publish his poems for him, he replied:

When a man has given himself to God's service, when he has denied himself and followed Christ, he has fitted himself to receive from God a special guidance...This guidance is conveyed partly by the action of other men as his appointed superiors, and partly by direct light and inspirations. If I wait for such guidance about anything...about my poetry for instance, I do more wisely in every way than if I try to serve my own interests in the matter. If you value what I write...much more does our Lord. And if he chooses to avail himself of what I leave at his disposal, He can do so with a felicity...which I could never command...To live by faith is very hard; nevertheless, by God's help, I shall always do so. 16

More briefly he says to his close friend Robert Bridges:

When I say I do not mean to publish, I speak the truth. 17

II Gerard felt even then that English was deteriorating. This explains the use, at times, of archaic language, the disappearance of which was, to him, a loss to the English language:-

"I am learning Anglo-saxon," he writes to Bridges, "and it is a vastly superior thing to what we have now, it makes one weep to think what English might have been." 18

III The gift of poetry, or any other outstanding gift, should draw the man into a deeper relationship with the Lord, but in many poets we do not see the reflection of their gift in their lives. Many religious poets who preceded Gerard were just that- religious poets - and there it ended. But with Gerard we do see spiritual growth as his genius matures.

Hopkins' life was a continuous substantial progress towards perfection. He believed this, he lived this, this is what he wrote. 19

IV Gerard insists that his poems be read aloud.

Repeatedly and most insistently he implores and pleads with his friends to read and reread his verse and read it aloud, read it with the ear and declaim it; 20

(His verse) is, as living art should be, made for performance, and its performance is not reading with the eye, but loud, leisurely, poetical (not rhetorical) recitation. 21

Hence the title of this article. 22

The Early Period (1860-1875)

Some writers ignore the earliest poems as mere experiments. It is true they are not Gerard's mature work, though there are some gems that point the way to a greater future. They cover a wide span; the schoolboy period, the Oxford undergraduate, his conversion and reception into the Church and the seven silent years of formation in the Society of Jesus, i.e. until two years before his ordination. These were big changes in Gerard's life and they are reflected in his writing. There are twentyseven completed poems in this period, of which two thirds are religious.

One of the characteristics of these early poems is the variety of stanzaic

patterns Gerard used by way of experiment. Some of these he abandoned, others he returned to later. His first notable poem "The Fscorial", written in 1860, shows a dependence on Spencer and Keats. George Herbert was a major influence also, and continued to be during his Oxford experience. Two gems written at this time deserve mention: "Heaven-Haven" and "The Habit Of Perfection". Space obviously precludes my going into all these early poems, so I am selecting those that reflect his turning to the Church.

See How Spring Opens With Disabling Cold - June 1865

The poet is regretting his past youth and its little spiritual fruit. He has been so long in discovering:

... that threshold  
Which should ere now have led my feet to the fold...

His previous convictions hold him back and he compares his spiritual life to a poor harvest and concludes with:

...Therefore how bitter, and learnt how late, the truth.

Let Me Be To Thee As The Circling Bird - October, 1865

Although a year had yet to elapse before his reception into the Church, this poem, like the previous one, reveals a certainty of where the truth, and his ultimate destiny, lie. In the previous poem he was an untilled field; here the metaphor is music. He has found pleasure in bird song:

...And every praised sequence of sweet strings,  
And know infallibly which I preferred,  
The authentic cadence was discovered late...

...I have found the dominant of my range and state...

The Halfway House - October, 1865, the same time as the above.

It is interesting to note here Gerard's devotion to the Eucharist and his disaffection with the Anglican view of a merely symbolic presence of Jesus Christ in the bread and wine.

...My national old Egyptian reed gave way;

...Hear yet my paradox: Love, when all is given,  
To see thee I must see thee, to love, love...

...You have your wish, enter these walls, one said:  
He is with you in the breaking of the bread.

Seventeen months earlier, Gerard had written to his schooltime friend, E.H.Coleridge, grandson of the poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge, as follows:

The great aid to belief and object of belief is the doctrine of the Real Presence in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. Religion without that is sombre, dangerous, illogical, with that it is - not to speak of its grand consistency and certainty - loveable. Hold that and you will gain all Catholic truth. 33

Nondum (not Yet) - Lent 1866.

A beautiful poem, written about seven months before his reception into the Church, shows that the struggle was still going on. He is utterly dependent on God, to be led by him.

... Oh, till Thou givest that sense beyond,  
To show Thee that Thou art and near  
Let patience with her chastening wand  
Dispel the doubt and dry the tear;  
And lead me childlike by the hand;  
If still in darkness, not in fear...

### The Habit Of Perfection

This section would not be complete without some further mention of this poem, referred to on page 6. The paradox of the discipline of the senses opening the soul to 'the uncreated light' is worked through skillfully and with beauty.

### The Middle Years

#### I. The Wreck Of The Deutschland 1875-1876

Gerard destroyed his poems before entering the Society of Jesus,<sup>24</sup> an act which he referred to in his Journal as 'the slaughter of the innocents'. Until the end of 1875, therefore, silence ensued. This silence was terminated at the suggestion of his Superior that he write 'something' about the five Franciscan Nuns, exiles from the Falk laws, who were drowned on December 7, 1875. As a consequence there flowed from his pen the thirtyfive stanza ode which we know as "The Wreck of the Deutschland".

As a poem it is out of context in the Victorian era from which it sprang. Here was something quite off the beaten track: the introduction of sprung rhythm, the 'chimes' and speech sounds of the Welsh bards, the internal rhyming and alliteration of consonants and all the other 'oddities' we met with in the section 'Rhymes and Chimes'. It is a difficult poem, intellectually and emotionally, a poem that has to be lived rather than read, and not to be lightly tossed aside. Small wonder then that Gerard's two poet friends, Robert Bridges and Coventry Patmore could not understand it. Two editors, to whom it was sent, refused it out of hand! Our pluralistic age, however, finds it easier to digest. W.H. Gardner, in his introduction to the third edition of the poems, speaks thus:

This work peals out like a massive overture at the beginning of this man's all-too-brief opera. 25

"The Wreck of the Deutschland" is not simply a poem about a shipwreck, it is a drama of God and man, of suffering and triumph, of a journey like that which each of us must make - fraught with pain, disaster, frustration and suffering, by means of which we come to experience the paradox of God's mastery over our lives, and of his love. I will sum up the poem briefly.

Stanzas 1-11 These first eleven verses describe the poet's own experience; we do not know to what he is referring, but it seems to have been a time of crisis, of temptation, of deep suffering, of conversion. He writes:



...I did say yes  
O at lightning and lashed rod:  
Thou heardest me truer than tongue confess  
Thy terror, O Christ, O God;  
Thou knowest the walls, altar and hour and night  
The swoon of a heart that the sweep and the hurl of thee trod  
Hard down with a horror of height;... Stanza 2

God's finger touched him and he "fled with a fling of the heart to the heart of the Host" knowing that only in Christ is all redemption. But there must be a going down into the tomb, a purification, in order that there may be a rising to new life. In a letter to Bridges, Gerard states:

...what refers to myself in the poem is all strictly true and did all occur; nothing is added for poetical padding... 26

Stanzas 12-24 - recount the shipwreck in all its stark reality.

...Wiry and white-fiery and whirlwind- swivelled snow  
Spins to the widow-making unchilding unfathering deeps...  
Stanza 13

Man is not in control of his life. Helpless and powerless, he must turn to God who alone can lead him through the most excruciating circumstances to his ultimate destiny. When man is at his most desperate, if he clings to God, hope will be kindled. A Sister demonstrates this. In her extremity she calls out: "O Christ, Christ, come quickly!" In the frenzy of the storm and the panic on board the ship, she bears witness to a hope which transcends all the horrors and darkness. Christ is her all, nothing can separate her from him. Her vision is clear. Her cry is not only her own but for all who are suffering.

It is the nature of gift to bestow, so her call to God becomes the call of all around her, an invitation for them to hand over and submit their lives to God. 27

Stanzas 25-35 - further reflections on the Sister's cry:

...Is it love in her of the being as her lover had been? St. 25

He contrasts the nun's cry with the "We are perishing" of the disciples of Jesus on the lake. Hers is a cry, not of despair but of faith:-

...They were else-minded then, altogether, the men  
Woke thee with a we are perishing in the weather of Gennesareth.  
Or is it that she cried for the crown then,  
The keener to come at the comfort for feeling the combating keen?  
Stanza 25

The poet enters into the confusion of the struggle and finds the answer to the nun's cry. It is Christ himself, in whatever way he may make himself known.

... Ipe, the only one, Christ, King, Head... Stanza 28

He comes striding over the waters of tumult, the triumphant Lord. He is the Lord of this wreck, the master of living and dead.

... Ah! there was a heart right!  
There was a single eye... Stanza 29

The poet remembers that the following day is the feast of the



Immaculate Conception and he sees the tragedy in a new light. Mary, the woman who was conceived without stain of sin is an image of this woman whose brief agony would bring forth Christ, the fruition for the other passengers as well as for the world.

... is the shipwreck then a harvest,  
Does tempest carry the grain for thee? Stanza 31

All suffering in Christ is redemptive, no matter who we are, where we are, or in what circumstances we may be. Like the nun we enter into the paschal mystery and help to make it effective for all the world.

The final stanzas conclude the poem with a prayer, heavily loaded with metaphor. He addresses the nun, baptized in the sacrificial waters, begging her to intercede for his country and for all pilgrims still journeying towards the kingdom. He prays that Christ may reign in the hearts of his countrymen and that their 'dimness' may be transformed into the radiance of his glory. Then, indeed, the 'shipwreck' will be a harvest and the tempest 'carry grain for thee.'

(I am indebted to Sr. C.M.O.P. for the insights and for much of the material in his section on this.)

## The Middle Years      II      1877-1880

This period, the post-Deutschland period, includes Gerard's last year of theology, his preparation for the priesthood, His initiation into parish work as a preacher in London, a brief interlude as sub-minister (bursar) at St. Mary's College, assistant pastor at St. Aloysius' Oxford and various other parishes. Changes were rapid and of short duration. It was a very rich and fruitful time for the poet. The year 1877 brought forth ten sonnets, and the Oxford period produced six more, all of the highest quality. Almost all were nature poems reflecting Gerard's sacramental view of nature, through inscape and instress, drawing men to God. The Incarnation is his principal theme, as he sees it reflected throughout the whole of creation. 'Ipse' (Himself) is to be perceived in the everchanging, yet constant, creational scene. Sometimes this is instressed in imagery, sometimes it has to be sought for and gleaned from the poet's obscure wording, but the pattern is there. The world is God's good news to man.

As early as 1877, five months before his ordination we find Gerard writing to Robert Bridges that he is 'very tired, yes, a thousand times and yet a thousand times tired'.<sup>3</sup> Two years later he refers to surgery. He continues over the years to confide to his friend that he feels 'so fagged,' 'much jaded' in a 'state of weakness', 'always jaded,' always tired'. During the Dublin period this was intensified as we shall see later. The duties of his state were absorbing, full of difficult and harassing problems. His priestly consecration and his functions as a priest were his primary concern and every detail demanded by them was scrupulously discharged. Poetry took second place. His life was:

...a dramatic record of a man (and a priest) caught up in a dialogue with God about the things of God... 29

Add to this a sensitivity to ill health, and a highly strung nature, and we can conclude that many of his poems were born in suffering.

It is difficult to pick out certain poems for comment from this very rich section. Obviously the three printed in the breviary must take first place. Then 'The Windhover', for its sheer excellence, cannot be omitted. All these

were written in 1877.

God's Grandeur (Breviary: Appendix 4)

The grandeur of God is inherent in his creation. It blazes forth in sudden brilliance like silver foil being shaken. Gerard explains his meaning:

All things are charged with love, are charged with God, and, if we know how to touch them, give off sparks and take fire...ring and tell of him. 30

This is also manifested in a slow way; like oil oozing from a crushed olive; but all men do not recognize God. They live as if in a treadmill. Money-making has seared, bleared, smeared their sight, and nature is barren like winter, unfeeling.

Yet there is hope. Nature has a source of renewed life in herself, 'freshness deep down things'. There is a sunrise in the 'brown brink eastward'. The word 'brown' here means brightness, from the Old English 'brun'. And the Holy Spirit still broods creatively over the earth, like a mother bird over her eggs, to initiate new life and salvation.

...Because the Holy Ghost over the bent  
world broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.

Pied Beauty (Breviary: Appendix 4)

This is also a sonnet, but a 'curtal' or short one, only ten and a half lines instead of the conventional fourteen.

It is a prayer of praise from beginning to end. The images Gerard uses are unconventional. The word Pied itself, or variegated, two-colored, indicates something unusual, a breakthrough. The Victorian era saw the rise of the industrial revolution; similarly, the machine age tended to produce a uniformity of thought patterns in the social order. The poet breaks through this with a world of diversified effects that would not at once be recognized as beautiful: 'couple-colored skies,' 'a brindled cow', that is, one in which brown is streaked with another color, 'rose-colored trout' falling chestnuts that break open to reveal 'fresh fire coal,' birds' wings, the land pieced out patchworkwise, fishing tackle that no one ever before considered beautiful! So much variety! Such strong imagery! St. Thomas said change presupposes the Unchangeable, which is the climactic peak of the sonnet.

...He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change:  
Praise him.

The May Magnificat (Breviary: Appendix 4)

There is not much to say about this simple little poem, 'a popular piece', as Gerard called it. It was written at Stonyhurst College, where Gerard was stationed for the summer months to coach students in classics for university entrance. It was a May custom in the college for students to write poems in honor of Mary. These were placed before the statue of the Blessed Virgin. The Fathers subsequently judged the poems they thought suitable for publication. Gerard's poem did not pass. The stanzaic pattern was unusual and the sprung rhythm was not understood by the judges, who thought it all too odd. 31 The poet himself found 'something displeasing' in the poem but does not specify. It may be of interest to note that the custom of dedicating the month of May to the Blessed Virgin was comparatively new in England. It was introduced by an Italian priest, Fr. Aloysius Gentili in 1840.

The Windhover. - To Christ Our Lord

This is said to be one of Gerard's greatest poems. The poet himself referred to it as '...the best thing I ever wrote.' 32

It is a complex sonnet with depths of meaning. So complex is it that commentators, while unanimous as to its excellence, differ widely about its actual meaning. To do the sonnet justice in a short summary such as this is nearly impossible. I can only offer a few thoughts gleaned from many widely differing interpretations.

There are three levels of meaning here. In the literal sense there is a real bird, a kestrel, that is, a small falcon, blue grey above and russet red beneath. Shakespeare knew the bird under the name 'coystrill'. The poet watches the bird, swooping, gliding, soaring with the upbeat of its powerful wings, overcoming the prevailing wind in a joyous ecstasy of mastery and independence:

...striding

High there, how he rung upon the rein of a wimpling wing  
In his ecstasy! then off, off forth on swing,  
As a skate's heel sweeps smooth on a bow-bend: the hurl and gliding  
Rebuffed the big wind...

Some commentators see no more than this, a nature poem, beautifully expressed with all the characteristic Hopkinsian vivid imagery, tenseness, power and originality. But we must note the subtitle, 'To Christ Our Lord'. This is the second level. While the eyes of the poet are on the bird's flight, his heart is concerned with a new depth:

...Brute beauty and valor and act...

are as nothing compared with 'my chevalier'

...oh, air, pride, plume here  
Buckle!...

( buckle means grapple, engage in combat)

All the elements which caused the poet such wonder and joy with the bird reinterpret the struggle in a different sense. The bird's powerful mastery of the elements becomes Christ's victory, his supremacy over all the powers of evil ranged against him, his triumphant conquest of sin and death, disease and diabolical powers.

...AND the fire that breaks from thee then, a billion  
Times told lovelier, more dangerous, O my chevalier!...

The third level of understanding refers to the poet himself. Within his heart he experiences a call to which he responds. He has given his whole being to the Lord who now calls him to a still deeper level of discipleship. There is nothing spectacular, but:

... No wonder of it: sheer plod makes plough down sillion  
Shine...

His lowly role is linked with Christ: 'Through poverty, through labor, through crucifixion his majesty of nature more shines' 33 Gerard's crucifixion was to be his increasing bad health:



...blue-bleak embers

Fall, gall themselves, and gash gold-vermilion.

Fall, gall (suffering) in Christ leads to the gold-vermilion, the colors of majesty in the Kingdom to come.

The Middle Years     III     1881-1883

Few poems were written during this period. Gerard made his tertianship at this time and voluntarily renounced the writing of poetry in order to give himself wholly to the works of the spirit. In the Fall of 1882 he returned to Stonyhurst College to teach classics. It was at this time that he wrote the beautiful poem 'The Blessed Virgin Compared With The Air We Breathe'. The original title was 'Mary, Mother Of Divine Grace, Compared To The Air We Breathe'. This is, alas, too long to reproduce and its theological richness would require an article of its own.

Gerard speaks of great fatigue in 1883 and felt his poetic vein was running out. This was far from being the case as we shall see.

The Dublin Period     1884-1889

In February 1884 Gerard was appointed to University College, Dublin, as lecturer in classics and examiner for students all over the country. In 1885 he entered into a period of spiritual desolation. The work in the University, heavy as it was, combined with his continual fatigue and ill-health, a spiritual aridity that descended upon him, the sense of being abandoned by God and without hope on account of his sinfulness, all plunged him into the deepest depression and misery. All was darkness and frustration. This was 'my winter world'. He writes to Bridges of 'that coffin of weakness and dejection in which I live'.

34

'The six sonnets of desolation' composed during this year form a series. There are no titles, but the first lines bear witness to the intensity of the poet's suffering. I have put them into their logical order, which may not be their chronological order. This cannot be traced. Some critics add a further sonnet to this group, 'Spelt from Sybil's Leaves', which was written the year before. Some see this poem as merely a description of evening closing into night. Two of the best commentators, however, recognize the sonnet as autobiographical. Evening to night is symbolic of the judgement where two states alone matter: 'black, white; right, wrong;' And the closing lines certainly suggest hell:

...Where selfwrung, selfstrung, sheathe-and shelterless, thoughts  
against thoughts in groans grind.

'Spelt' is hard-grained wheat and the Sybil is the same prophet who appears with David in the opening lines of the Dies Irae, linking biblical and pagan prophecies:-

That day a day of wrath  
Shall reduce the world to ashes  
As do testify David and the Sybil. (Dies Irae)

35

Though they may not all agree as to the exact meaning of these seven sonnets, 'even the most severe critics of the Jesuit have had to grant that here is his greatest poetry'. 36



To Seem The Stranger

This is a straightforward sonnet. Gerard's family were separated from him by religion. His sense of isolation is outlined in a colloquy with Christ:

...Father and mother dear  
Brothers and sisters are in Christ not near  
And he my peace my parting, sword and strife...

England, his 'wife', whom he loves dearly, has disappointed him. As her empire grows, it becomes more and more unchristian. Pleading would be useless; she would not listen. His treasure, the Catholic faith, is hoarded and unheeded. He longs to share this faith with those dearest to him, family, friends, his fellow countrymen, but they do not want to receive what he so much desires to give.

At this time he was in Ireland, a 'third remove' among strangers. It was not that he did not receive kindness but that what he most wanted to say was somehow thwarted, leaving him unheard, unheeded and lonely. Mariani styles the poem 'a personal talk between the poet and his God.' 37

I Wake And Feel The Fell Of Dark (Breviary: Vol. 1)

Here the darkness is deeper!

... What hours, O what black hours we have spent  
this night! ...

He knows there are more to come before light dawns. His 'hours' are years, his whole life. He cries out to God, but his cries are like dead letters sent to a beloved and never destined to be delivered, for God lives far away and he cannot contact him. St. John of the Cross says that one of the greatest tortures of the soul:

...is the thought that God has abandoned it, of which it has no doubt; that he has cast it away into darkness as an abominable thing...the shadows of death and the pains and torments of hell are most acutely felt, that is, the sense of being without God. 38

The 'selfyeast' of the spirit has become a sour dull dough. All is bitterness. He compares his state with that of the souls in hell.

... The lost are like this, and their scourge to be  
As I am mine, their sweating selves; but worse.

No Worst, There Is None

This is the most terrible of all these sonnets of desolation. The darkness is complete;

... Pitched past pitch of grief...

'Pitch' here means the highly strung stressed self. There is no question of light being delayed, light had gone entirely, and there was more suffering:

...More pangs will, schooled at forepangs, wilder wring...

The poet cries to the Holy Spirit, the Comforter: '...where is your comforting?' And to Mary, our Mother: '...where is your relief?' He comes close to despair. This was surely the sonnet that he wrote of to

Bridges as having been 'written in blood.' Was he crying out against the world domination of sin, or perhaps the effects of sin in the words:

...My cries heave, herds-long; huddle in a main, a chief  
Woe, world-sorrow... ?

He likens himself to a man clinging to a cliff, or a steep mountainside. He must hang on or fall:

... O the mind, mind has mountains; cliffs of fall  
Frightful, sheer, no-man-fathomed. Hold them cheap  
May who ne'er hung there...

Only his entire submission to God can keep him holding on. A fall would be despair. But:

... Life death does end and each day dies with sleep.

There will be an end to these pains and desolation; sleep brings a temporary respite and is an image of death which ends all suffering.

### Carriion Comfort

Here the poet is in dialogue with himself. His will is firmly linked with Christ, but the self that seeks relief - 'carriion comfort'- is urged on to despair:

...Not, I'll not, carriion comfort, Despair, not feast on thee:...

The sonnet begins in this way.

Even in this extreme desolation which wrings from him the cry:- 'I can no more,' he quickly adds: 'I can.' He can hope, he can choose to be with Christ. He has free will. He will not untwist the strands of his humanity that bind him to Christ. He has kissed the rod, submitted to Christ, and he is totally in God's hands. He remembers the joy and consolation he experienced at the former time when he kissed the rod:

...my heart lo! lapped strength, stole joy would laugh, cheer...

But now! Whom should he cheer? Christ who has flung him down from heaven? Or himself who dares to wrestle with God? The memory of the joy he received on that other occasion supports him now as he once more wrestles with God.

...That night, that year

Of now done darkness I wretch lay wrestling with (my God!) my  
God.

### Patience, Hard Thing

Patience is a hard and difficult thing. To attain it we must pray for it and to pray for it is to ask for battles and interior conflicts, weariness, renunciation, struggle and implicit obedience:

Patience, hard thing! the hard thing but to pray,  
But bid for, Patience is! Patience who asks  
Wants war, wants wounds; weary his times, his tasks;  
To do without, take tosses, and obey.

The hard won patience is precisely the fruit of these struggles. Like ivy, it grows slowly, covering our past wrecked endeavors:

...Natural heart's ivy, Patience masks  
Our ruins of wrecked past purpose...

Our hearts rebel, we must 'bruise' them, asking God to bend our rebellious wills to himself. The sonnet moves between two poles, severity and sweetness. In the last three lines the war, wounds, grating and bruised hearts give way to the sweetness of honey in the comb:

...And where is he who more and more distills  
Delicious kindness? - He is patient. Patience fills  
His crisp combs, and that comes those ways we know.

My Own Heart Let Me Have More Pity On (Breviary: Vols. I, II, III)

This, the last of the sonnets of desolation, shows the poet rising from the depths of his misery to a God who is smiling again, though this upward movement does not really get under way until the last three lines. He realizes he must be kind to himself, something we all have to learn at some point in our journey to God. He refuses to live with a tormented mind: 'With this tormented mind tormenting yet.' He casts round for comfort, but cannot find it, any more than a blind man who thirsts for water 'in all a world of wet.' In the sextet he gives himself some good advice to call off disturbing thoughts and to leave comfort foot-room:

...let joy size  
At God knows when to God knows what; whose smile  
's not wrung, see you; unforeseen times rather - as skies  
Betweenpie mountains - lights a lovely mile.

The word 'betweenpie' has puzzled commentators. 'Pie' means variegated color, and 'between' belongs to the 'mountains', so God's smile is a colorful break in the sky between somber mountains. Applying this to the spiritual torment Gerard has been through, we can infer that he now enjoys a sunny breakthrough between the dark mountains, lighting up his way - a lovely mile.

Thou Art Indeed Just (Breviary: Vols I, II, III and IV)

This poem was written four years after the seven sonnets we have been considering, and only three months before his death on June 8, 1889. I have only included it for special mention because the compilers of appendix 4 of our breviary evidently considered the sonnet important, since it appears in all four volumes, a compliment granted to no other poem!

The theme here is from Jeremiah 12:1 Gerard writes to Bridges that the poem should be read 'adagio molto' (with great stress). 140 The poet's problem, and the prophet's also, is that God is just, yet sinners prosper in all their doings, while all he does ends in disappointment. He is God's friend, yet:

... Wert thou my enemy, O thou my friend,  
How wouldst thou worse, I wonder, than thou dost  
Defeat, thwart me?...

'The sots and thralls of lust' i.e. the wicked, thrive better than he does whose life is spent in God's cause. He notices the abundant and lavish beauty of spring. The birds build, but he builds nothing. Try as he will, not one good work can he do. He begs the Lord:

... Send my roots rain.

## Conclusion

This brings us to the end of our survey of a selection from Gerard Manley Hopkins' seventy five completed poems. If his output was small by comparison with some other poets, his work must be judged less by quantity than by quality. He is a religious poet of the highest calibre. Some regard him as a mystical writer, particularly with respect to the 'sonnets of desolation'.

There is little in the whole of English lyrical poetry that touched so convincingly that darkness preceding dissolution, when the soul, stripped to its essential self, must finally confront its Creator...A vision of a dark, rarely visited spiritual plateau has been translated into religious poetry of a very high order.<sup>41</sup>

May the example and prayers of Gerard Manley Hopkins help those in spiritual desolation to cling to the Lord in naked faith and win through to the joyful death that was his.

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THE SUN

The Sun  
    is ninety-three million  
        miles from the earth  
Yet it warms  
    each tiny seed  
        into life and fruition.

The Sun shines  
    ceaselessly,  
    without faltering, without dimming,  
Untouched by earth's  
    clouds and darkness.  
If ever it ceased to shine,  
    each tiny seed  
        and every living creature  
    would die.

God's love is a Sun  
    infinitely above us  
Yet holding each  
    in intimate embrace.

He loves ceaselessly,  
    without faltering, without dimming,  
Untouched by storms  
    of human passion,  
Undeterred by darkness  
    of human sin.  
If ever he ceased to love,  
    each tiny seed  
        and every living creature  
    would cease.

Why do we speak  
    as if the Sun  
        did not shine  
        today?

Sr. Mary Martin, O.P.  
Summit

ADDRESS TO THE PRESIDENTS OF THE FEDERATION OF SPANISH  
DOMINICAN NUNS

Jean Jerome Hamer, O.P.

On April 7, 1986, at a meeting of the federal presidents of the monasteries of Spain and of superiors representing unfederated monasteries, the Cardinal prefect of the Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes, Monsignor Jean Jerome Hamer, O. P., delivered the following address.

Sisters:

It is a pleasure to greet you and through you, all the nuns of Spain, of this nation whose monasteries have given so many saints to the Church.

I am happy to greet you as prefect of the Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes, authorized in the name of the Holy Father to promote the consecrated life in the world and more particularly, in the contemplative life. I speak on behalf of the Holy Father, who, as Head of the Church, is also our first religious superior and spiritual teacher.

In addition, it is a pleasure to greet you in my capacity as a Dominican religious, a friar preacher, which I am with fervor and conviction. The Dominican ideal, that which attributes so much importance to the contemplation of the mystery of God, draws me close into solidarity with each of you.

Today I want to speak to you of the Church's esteem for your religious contemplative life. To this end, there is no better way than to remind you of the teachings of Vatican II concerning Perfectae Caritatis #7, "The Decree on the Adaptation and Renewal of the Religious Life."

"Those institutes that are entirely ordered towards contemplation, in which their members give themselves over to God alone in solitude and silence, in constant prayer and willing penance, will always have, no matter how pressing may be the needs of the active apostolate, an eminent place in the mystical body of Christ, whose "members do not all fulfill the same function" (Rom. 12:4). They offer to God an excellent sacrifice of praise, and with abundant fruits of holiness, they give splendor to the People of God whom they inspire by their example and enlarge by their hidden apostolic fruitfulness. Thus, they are a glory to the church and a fount of heavenly graces."

These are profound affirmations. I wish to underscore simply two principles:

-The contemplative religious life holds a privileged place in the church, in spite of the urgency of the works of the active apostolate.

-This life has a concrete-even secret-apostolic fruitfulness.

But these affirmations, an expression of our faith in the mystical body and in the communion of the saints, are based on a precise vision of the nature of the contemplative life. It is about the life of those institutes in which the members "devote themselves to God alone in solitude and silence, in constant prayer and willing penance."

Thus, with these four words the Council has wished to describe your life: solitude, silence, prayer and penance. These are in a certain way four characteristic works of your monastic life.

This does not mean that we are speaking of four unrelated activities. On the contrary, a strong bond unites them. One among them, prayer, is the crown; the others are supportive. Take, for example, solitude: this is separation but also nearness. It allows you to stand at a distance from the world you have left, but at the same time you walk towards a new reality. You do not go backwards. Conversely, you move on towards a more exclusive service to the Lord, towards a more intense prayer.

Then, the other activities of which the Council speaks, all indispensable, are organized for you around one only: constant prayer. Certainly all Christians worthy of this name pray and know the importance of prayer. However, caught up by the concrete realities of daily life, they cannot dedicate to prayer the place and time that you can. They cannot make prayer a primary occupation. It is enough to compare the schedule of one of your working days in the monastery with that of a Christian who lives in the world. The principle organizer of your day is the predominance of prayer.

Prayer itself has various exercises: the Liturgy of the Hours, mental prayer, lectio divina, personal prayers...but always it continues being 'prayer.' I have no intention of giving you here a definition of prayer. I would simply meditate with you on some reflections of Saint Augustine which go to the heart of the matter. Saint Augustine wishes to confront the question: Do we pray because the Lord does not know what we need? He answers: "This may seem strange if we do not understand that our Lord and God does not expect us to make known our needs and desires to Him, since certainly He cannot be unaware of them, but He intends that, through prayer, we increase our capacity of desiring in order to make ourselves more capable of receiving the gifts He prepares for us. His gifts, in effect, are tremendous and our capacity to receive them is small and insignificant." (Letter to Proba, 130)



Therefore, to pray, is to fully open our hearts to God, to stimulate our desire. And this can have only one objective: a blessed life united to the Lord our God. Prayer in this manner is a great beginning of our hope. We hope in God and everything leads us to Him. There is nothing individualistic in this; neither is it an evasion. If we hope for a blessed life for ourselves and for others, we desire that all existence and indeed, the whole world be organized in function of this fundamental hope. For a Christian, the desire for God is the beginning of brotherhood among men, of justice and peace. Our humanity is founded in God.

If the role of prayer is to increase our desire for God, we will understand sufficiently how this prayer has to and must change us continually. Prayer must lead us to a state of prayer, a permanent situation of needing God. Prayer would make little sense if we limited it to the time provided by our conventual schedules and to those times we dedicate under the title of private prayer. It must be prolonged throughout life. On the other hand, let us have no illusions: this spirit cannot be maintained without regularity - and very often - by moments of prayer. As Saint Augustine reminds us: "Extraneous preoccupations and works weaken in us even the desire for prayer: it is for this reason that at fixed hours, we go apart in order to redirect our spirit to the task of prayer. Vocal prayer summons us again to the object of our desire."

The monastery is the place where one lives this presence of God. Everything there is seen in view of this function. Solitude and an atmosphere of silence, sustained by the common desire to safeguard them and to eliminate noise and distraction as much as possible. Penance, well understood, calms and frees us. "There is no other way to life and true interior peace than the way of the holy cross and daily mortification." This is the teaching of the Imitation of Christ (II, 12, 3) and of all the spiritual masters. The priority given to constant prayer confers on the life of the contemplative religious a profound unity in spite of the diversity of elements. The monastery is a school of desire for God. It is the privileged means whereby this yearning is alive and on fire.

These four characteristic activities of the contemplative life are experienced in the monastery for religious who have given themselves totally to the Lord by the profession of the evangelical counsels. These four words thus give a concrete form to your interior oblation and to your life in community.

Perhaps some of you will be surprised to see that I speak of 'works' and of 'activities' of the religious contemplative life. Is this not to misuse the words? Certainly some aspects of prayer and penance are 'activities,' but perhaps this is also true of solitude and silence. These ultimate realities, are they not before all else, states of being?

Here is how I answer these unspoken objections. Solitude and silence do not depend solely on the disposition of places; they have to be actively assumed. A good community wants these two

conditions of the life of prayer, and organizes everything in function of it. It watches constantly in order to safeguard these values, thereby making every opportune decision to this end. Is it necessary to recall that material solitude is not sufficient when a religious or a community is of mind and heart elsewhere? There are so many ways to cross over the walls! In order to desire the Lord it is necessary to have an available heart.

I have been visiting the monasteries of nuns for a long time. Soon after my priestly ordination in August 1941, I became chaplain of a monastery. What has always caught my attention has been the joy of the religious in the monasteries doing well. This is not at all strange. Your existence responds to the most profound aspirations of the human soul. We are made for God and our heart is anxious when it does not rest in Him. Your life of constant prayer, lived in contemplative solitude, guaranteed and supported by the law of the cloister, sustains you unceasingly in movement toward your search for God. Your happiness is the result of your conviction of traveling the true road.

That constant prayer ought to be nourished continually by your spiritual reading. Throughout your religious life, at every stage you have need of nourishment from revealed truth. "Those who have knowledge of the truth, love in fire." These words of Saint Angela of Foligno remind us that love proceeds from knowledge. You should desire more and more to know better the mystery of God and of salvation, not for curiosity or out of vanity, but for the restlessness of love. Your love of God leads you to recollect how much He has wished to reveal Himself. Therefore, select your readings with care, according to the indications of your Constitutions, with a true ecclesial spirit.

The preparation of the liturgical celebrations will contribute towards deepening this knowledge. The liturgy is at the same time both a celebration and sign. On the one hand it carries out in us the work of salvation and, on the other, it helps us to understand the same mystery through its signs and words. To understand in its simplicity and depth the Liturgy of the Mass, the Liturgy of the Hours, and the other rites such as those of Holy Week, is a wonderful initiation into the mystery which God reveals to us in His Son, Jesus Christ.

This, well understood, supposes a certain religious culture proportionate to the capacity of each one. You do not have to transform monasteries into small universities, but rather allow each religious to accede to a religious culture on the level of her human culture, having in mind the proper end of the monastic life. It is in this sense that the Holy Father, in an address directed to the nuns of Avila in November 1982, has called you "to continue cultivating your consecrated life through liturgical, biblical and spiritual renewal following the directives of the Council. All of this requires a permanent formation that enriches our spiritual life, giving it a solid doctrinal, theological and cultural foundation."

This religious life consecrated to constant prayer must be better understood by all. In the same address at Avila, the Pope called attention to the Christian communities and their pastors about the irreplaceable role the contemplative life holds in the Church. All of us should deeply appreciate and esteem the gift of contemplative souls.

Above all we must understand well that the special apostolate of the monasteries wholly consecrated to the contemplative life is, also, of contemplative character. It is not accomplished by means of the external works of the active apostolate, but solely by prayer and immolation. As we believe in the great and living reality that constitutes the mystical body of Jesus, we shall have no difficulty recognizing the reality and fruitfulness of this apostolate.

All of this is admirably summarized by Saint Therese of the Child Jesus: "Charity gave me the key to my vocation. I understood that if the Church had a body composed of diverse members, the most necessary and the most noble could not be lacking to her; I understood that the Church had a heart and that that Heart was burning with LOVE. I understood that LOVE alone moved the members of the Church to act, that if LOVE were extinguished, the Apostles would never more preach the Gospel, the Martyrs would refuse to shed their blood..."

You belong to diverse monastic families: with different founders, different spiritualities, and even the gifts you have received from the Lord are different, but in all of this you are deeply united in your will to live an authentic contemplative life in accord with the great spiritual tradition of the Church. In your necessary plurality, this contemplative life is one and unique. I believe that you will have recognized the ideal I have laid out before you in this brief address.

Finally, I repeat to each of you what John Paul II said to you at Avila: You "are very necessary to the Church," you "are the vanguard of the Church on its way to the kingdom."

Translated by Sister Ruth Ann Mary, O.P.  
Summit

## FIRST GLIMPSE OF MOTHER TERESA MARIA

### INTRODUCTION

We offer here an introduction to an outstanding Dominican contemplative nun, Mother Teresa Maria of the Monastery of Olmedo in Spain. Notes sketching her spiritual portrait have been compiled by her director, Don Baldomero Jimenez-Duque, and presented in a book recently published in Spanish. Sr. Mary of the Holy Cross has devoted much time and painstaking care to the translation of the book, and it is with joy and appreciation that we present the Preface and Chapter One, in the hopes that it may be possible to continue in future issues.

The fact that so many of Mother Maria Teresa's contemporaries are still living is both a help and a hindrance to the work of making her known abroad. The help is obvious: we see her through the eyes of those who have lived with her, known her voice, her look, the very texture of her life. Yet by the same token, it has not been possible as yet to fill in all the details, and especially the intricate setting of her life. These things must be filtered with the passing of time. Meanwhile, this is a first glimpse. It whets the appetite for more.

Sister Mary Thomas, O.P.  
Buffalo





## FIRST GLIMPSE OF MOTHER MARIA TERESA

### PREFACE

The rolled stone glides slowly on, through places where authentic witness has been given, and through all times. Wherever it has passed, its influence remains. This is the gift of great spirits: they 'roll on,' enriched through a variety of encounters, never used up, never diminished. They grow through their experiences. Like Jesus, they pass along doing good. They take root in the minds of those they meet. The remembrance of them gives courage. Their moral and intellectual greatness remains with us. Though they have passed out of sight, their presence is a felt reality.

This is what has happened in the Monastery of the Mother of God in Olmedo, in connection with Mother Teresa Maria. Her writings, her teachings, her decisions ... her papers, letters, books ... the sound of her voice on tapes, the atmosphere of calm and peace: all these are more than mere recollections for the Community of the Monastery of the Mother of God. There is a presence which lingers in the cloisters, the choir, the cells of this simple monastery. This is a phenomenon experienced even by strangers and guests visiting the Community. For the members of the Community it is an ongoing witness.

This book attempts to express this reality. Don Baldomero tells us it is not a biography of Mother Teresa Maria, but rather a collection of notes. Facts are missing, certainly: situations in time, references to historical and ecclesiastical circumstances. Missing are those syntheses which would delineate her character in its varying dimensions. Vatican Council II is only implicitly alluded to by the liturgical renewal which took place in the monastery, by the profound opening out of the missionary spirit, and by the freedom and healthy humanism of the true Spirit. Notes on Christian spirituality particularly emphasized by this Council are also missing.

These notes do, however, contain elements for the writing of a biography, elements which are stimulating and which can communicate the same enthusiasm which Mother Teresa Maria inspired by her presence. By means of these notes the author lets us draw near to this great soul of our own times, a soul whose vocation it was to be a rolling stone, and who continues to roll.

"Among Teresa and her friends there had been talk of the vocation of 'a rolling stone,' a soul of prayer, truly contemplative, ever moving towards those in need; a soul without fixed abode, unable to put down roots, held captive by no one and by nothing." (1) This recalls the freedom and expendability of the Lord's disciples, sent forth to announce the Gospel of peace. How much confidence this demands of those who entrust themselves to Him!

Teresa Maria felt called to the hidden life. Yet, she passed through many places -- Seville, Belmonte, Olmedo -- and from the Monastery of the Mother of God her spirit continues to roam the world, like the spirits of the great Teresas of Avila and Lisieux. From Olmedo too foundations have sprung up in many continents.

When the responsibilities of Prioress fell to her -- and she was born to be a spiritual leader in spite of her desire to remain hidden -- she wrote: "Lord, a new stage is beginning in my life now. My commitment to holiness is no longer merely personal; it extends to my entire Community."

(2) She had a growing sense of urgency, ever more pressing. Was hers the vocation of 'a rolling stone' or was it that of 'a snowball'? It was both. It was a vocation to sanctity. A rolling stone meant availability, openness, flexibility, freedom of spirit. A snowball meant constant growth, presence regardless of the cost, a burden growing ever heavier through continual rolling. A snowball is the same within and without. In this sense, although bulky, it is transparent. One sees only what it is, and nothing more. This vocation is filled through and through with the idea of holiness.

Teresa Maria wrote to a friend in Ulmedo just before her transfer from Seville: "I believe that what our Lord is offering to you and me is sanctity. We are so familiar with the idea of sanctity that in saying this it seems I have said something banal, obvious. Actually, as I see it now it is a novelty, and it is this that I long to communicate to you. There are no saints, Carmina. Definitely, there are no saints. There are too many things to think about, too many affairs which absorb us, too many preoccupations, (I do not wish to say what is even more painful, too much 'I'.) The question of holiness is pushed aside because the twentieth century mentality demands this, and claims for itself practically all the soul's energy. I see holiness as something so exquisite, so subtle, so illusive that it escapes our grasp." (3)

What is sanctity? "Something so exquisite, so subtle, so illusive." That is it. It is life, flowing, rolling on but with a new impetus, interior and profoundly sensitive to the movements of the Holy Spirit. Those who allow themselves to be moved by Him are saints. There is no human criterion for holiness, no human way of generating it in greater or lesser degree. We cannot achieve our own sanctity by an increase of fasting, of detachment, by less sleep or more charity to the poor, as if all these things corresponded to different degrees of holiness. Basically, holiness is grace, a gift of God, to be accepted positively.

There is passivity in receiving, activity in responding: passive and active fidelity. It is obvious that sanctity comes forth from the depths of the soul in confrontation with the unexpected, with what, at each moment, takes one by surprise, rather than from a series of planned activities. It is a matter of facing the surprise quality of life or its monotony from one's depths, of accepting Love with a response of love and trust: "something exquisite, subtle, of the here and now, illusive." Vigilance is necessary, an ever fresh attitude of renewed love, so that the unexpected may not find one unprepared, the monotonous may not plunge one into routine, so that preoccupations and concerns may not distract one from the goal.

"Those who are moved by the Spirit of God are the sons of God." (Romans 8:14) "He who draws near to the Lord is made one spirit with him." (I Cor. 6:17) This is docility, in perfect harmony with the Spirit of God.

It is the state of the greatest connaturality with His movement. If to be docile means to be teachable, who can be more docile than a little child? A child is open and receptive because he is a child; also, he is weak and powerless because he is a child. This condition calls for constant growth. Everything has to be given to a child; he expects this and is not surprised by it. He accepts his dependence happily and finds it quite natural. In the supernatural order, the essential signs of this childlike attitude are humility, or the recognition of one's own powerlessness and weakness; the awareness of God's fatherhood, which gives rise to unlimited confidence in His love; and finally a growing desire to be docile to His Spirit, to be guided by Him, and to become more and more His child.

When we look at ourselves, we see our poverty. When we look at God, we see Him as Father. The result is that we allow ourselves to be guided with complete confidence, like a rolling stone. That is all.

Don Baldomero Jimenez-Duque, great guide of souls and penetrating judge of the history of spirituality and of the human heart, knew Mother Teresa Maria intimately in some of the more difficult stages of her 'rolling.' He offers us a first-hand glimpse of her spirit in the present work of Christian spirituality. May it produce all the fruit it promises and deserves, for the glory of God.

Jose Delicado  
Archbishop of Valladolid

AUTHOR'S NOTE: This is not a biography of Mother Teresa Maria, but merely a collection of notes which might be of use to a future biographer. They are written principally by her, as will be seen. The testimonies of her nuns also form a major contribution. The rest is a bundle of sheaves from my own gleanings. Perhaps I should have done better to have said less. But I shall leave it as it is -- my own personal tribute to this admirable and much admired woman. -- B.J.D.

## CHAPTER ONE FIRST YEARS

Teresa was born in Puentecaldelas(Pontevedra) on Christmas day, 1917, at nine in the evening. Her parents were Don Jose Maria Ortega Ijazo and Dona Manuela Pardo Valdemar -- Galician and Aragonese blood -- a difficult combination, but successfully blended. He was a native of Teruel but had been appointed head of the telegraph service in Puentecaldelas where he met and married Dona Manuela. He was a man of great intellectual, moral and religious qualities. Dona Manuela was a deeply religious woman, a woman with a keen sense of responsibility leading to heroism in the fulfillment of her duties as wife and mother. Her temperament was Celtic -- softened by the fresh airs of the sea and the virgin forests of Galicia.

Teresa Angela Maria was baptized in the parish church of St. Eulalia on January 9th, 1918. Two more children were to follow: Encarnita and Gregorio. The parish register gives the year of her first holy communion as 1925, the only record we have of the event. We know little of her early childhood, only that she was greatly attached to her mother. When she was five, her father wanted to take her with him to Teruel to visit his own family, but the child would not consent to leave her mother. Years later, when her mother died, Teresa felt the loss keenly, but rose above her suffering with characteristic energy. She once remarked, "No one could ever fill the void left by my mother's death." She had a deep love for her father and aunts, but the memory of her mother remained fresh throughout her life, wherever she might travel.

In 1926 Don Jose Maria was transferred back to Teruel and it was here that Dona Manuela died on September 12th, 1927. The widower and his orphans depended now on his sisters: Lola, wife of General Isidoro Ortega; Maria, wife of Don Emilio Bonilla, and Encarnacion who was unmarried and who became a second mother to the three children.

Teresa, though very feminine, cared little as a child for playing house or raising a family of dolls, pasttimes so intriguing to most of the small girls she knew. Her preference lay with outdoor games such as jumprope, quoits, various ball games and a favorite sport which involved throwing the 'devil' up over the highest buildings and then catching him with a halter. This game she invariably won. We are also told that she was an expert juggler. Her audience would watch enthralled as she threw her balls one after another into the air to form an elliptical curve and deftly caught each one with never a miss.

At indoor gatherings Teresa was fond of reciting poetry, some of it composed by herself. When company was expected, she would beg her Aunt Encarna to call her. She would appear in a gay scarf and with much grace recite the poetry of her choice. She once put into verse an entire novel written by Father Colona, S.J.

Teresa's first teacher, particularly in mathematics, was her father. Her aunts also arranged to have a professor come to the house to teach the two girls, but he found it difficult to get much cooperation from them. They simply hid in the attic to avoid his classes. Eventually the girls were sent to a Franciscan academy as boarding students.



How should we describe Teresa's personality during these first years of adolescence and youth? She was very graceful, sympathetic, happy, a good friend. Everyone liked her. She knew how to create a warm, friendly atmosphere because of her affectionate and pleasing nature. She had a fine artistic sense, studying music with her Aunt Encarna and playing the piano with proficiency. Whatever she set her hand to succeeded, and she invariably led in classes and games. She had a strong will and was very independent, liking to undertake new and difficult projects and carrying them through with firmness. Enhancing all these gifts was an irresistible power of persuasion. This composite image of Teresa never dimmed; rather, its lines were etched ever more deeply with the passing of time.

The beginnings of bad health began to appear at this period. Teresa suffered pains in her stomach and frequent indigestion. These symptoms defied diagnosis and were to remain and increase throughout her life. Since her mother's death Teresa had grown somewhat reserved, and at the age of thirteen, with the natural crisis of adolescence, this reserve was intensified. Her family surrounded her with kindness, but at the same time with demands. Their cult of "rectitude and exactness" was typical of Christian families of the period. Teresa adapted to this environment with simplicity and grace but lost nothing of her native vigor and independence. At about this time a young man became interested in her and she responded, but managed to hide everything from the family. This situation soon created many difficulties for her at home, occasioning frequent reprimands. The brief adventure came to an abrupt end, leaving no notable repercussions in later life. It may have been the needed stimulus for her to launch out definitively in a new direction.

Teresa was now fifteen years old. What to do? In Teruel, as in all of Spain, these were years of the second republic; fermentation of ideas and attitudes was widespread. The Christian faith was being shaken. It was more demanding, more exacting. It was being purified. Alarmed by all these events and by Teresa's personal crisis as well, her family, and particularly her aunts, felt urged to give her a stronger formation in religion and in the apostolate. Providentially, several persons assisted them in this matter. Don Manuel Hinojosa, a very holy priest and close friend of the family, became her spiritual director at this time. He died a martyr in 1936; Teresa kept an indelible memory of him, and held him in great veneration. Another influential person in her life was Dona Dolores Albert, wife, mother and ardent apostle in the field of Catholic Action, who initiated a group of young people, Teresa among them, in this work. Of later significance was Teresa's meeting with Julieta Elipe, a young girl deeply involved in the apostolate. Everyone and everything contributed to what might be called Teresa's "conversion," or better, her "surrender" to the challenge of a totally uncompromising Christian life, whatever the consequences.

Let us take a look at Catholic Action in the years following the second world war. This movement had deep significance, and its sociological influence reached to all the Church and the whole environment of life in Spain in those days. It was a movement which generated secular groups of men and woman of all ages in an authentic Christian sense. The spiritual life was deeply cultivated. In many, it gave rise to an apostolic and social restlessness variously translated into action and further engendering more specific movements to meet different circumstances or needs which arose. It was a Catholic Action which matured during the difficulties of the republic, then during the war years, and still later

after the war. It drew propagandists of all kinds: organizational leaders, catechists, judges, politicians, martyrs. But as often happens with broad movements, its "gas energy" began to disappear little by little, especially at the end of the fifties. Between the thirties and fifties, however, its history was glorious, and it still awaits its historians.

Such was the atmosphere Teresa breathed during those years. In Teruel the Catholic Action groups were alive and vigorous. She received much; her potential was on the increase.

Given her great qualities and aptitude, Teresa soon began to act as propagandist of the group in her own town and further afield. She was highly intelligent and articulate; her generosity was firm and growing. Her life was rooted in solid spirituality and flowered in deep devotion to the Eucharist and a total personal surrender. Even in those early years she was often doubled up with pain when addressing groups. Her father encouraged her to utter fidelity to her commitments whatever the cost. We learn from her that she often rehearsed her talks before her family, usually on the terrace of their home in Daroca where they vacationed.

The following incident illustrates Teresa's availability and her gift for relating to her audience. Just before the tragedy of Teruel, towards the beginning of the war, a military officer asked a priest to give a talk to his soldiers. Unable to meet the request at the time, the priest wrote and asked Teresa to give the talk in his place. The officer delivered the letter to Teresa, under the impression that she was being asked to find another priest. She read the letter, then astonished him by quietly saying that she she would gladly address his soldiers. He acquiesced, but prepared the soldiers in advance for the unexpected situation. When the moment arrived there were, inevitably, murmurs, smiles between questions and roguish remarks from the youthful group. Here was a young girl of about twenty, graceful but frail looking, proposing to speak to them about religion. It took Teresa a mere five minutes to turn the group into an amazed, fascinated and absorbed audience. Had she been a priest they would probably all have wanted to go to confession. Happenings like this were frequent.

War broke out in 1936. In December of 1937 the great battle of Teruel began and lasted until February, 1938. At the beginning of January the last resources of the heroic city had fallen into the hands of the Communists. They were retrieved however by the Nationals the following month.

The tragedy that befell Teresa and her family during those terrible days is not easy to describe. Since the city was under attack for twenty-four days, they first took refuge in a cave, and later in a military post held by the Nationals, amidst explosions and crumbling buildings, as well as hunger, thirst and death on all sides. In some brief autobiographical notes Teresa describes how she and another young girl ventured out to save

the Blessed Sacrament in the church of San Juan, and how she later conceived the idea of making hosts so that the priest could celebrate the Eucharist and distribute Holy Communion. But we will let her tell us. She recounts how they returned to the cave from San Juan Church, but soon had to abandon it because of the danger of suffocating or of being blockaded:

"We started out towards the military post held by the Nationals. We could not reach the school, another point of defense. All the wire cables were on the ground, we were walking over them. Total destruction everywhere ... all the houses had fallen ... it was night, and we had not so much as a flashlight with us ... all was thick darkness, and freezing ... twenty below zero ... without water, soiled and exiled, walking on frozen ground, we were on a terrible pilgrimage without any fixed destination or hope.

"But deep within was an invisible, mysterious source of strength accompanying us in our exile ... it seemed impossible, yet He was with us! It was my good fortune to be the one to carry Him ... how tremendous ... what strength!

"We arrived at the post and found some priests there. I could no longer keep the secret; it would not be just. I spoke to a Franciscan Father and he told me to give him the Blessed Sacrament. Afterwards, I wept for having spoken. If I had kept silent no one would have known that I carried the Hosts. But I knew I had to speak. With these Hosts, all received Holy Communion. I asked Father for the corporals, and preserved them with the utmost care.

"The siege lasted twenty-four days. Our greatest anguish was not to be able to receive Communion daily. If only we could do that! But there were no more Hosts reserved, no forms or machines to make hosts ... I looked for two flat hand irons and heated them. Then I hunted for some flour and water ... water was so scarce that many died of thirst. With the water and flour I made a light dough and put it between the irons. The resulting forms were unshapely and there was much flour on them -- but God descended there -- the Franciscan Father consecrated daily ... what mystery!... 'I saw Him coming from the threshing floor...' We had Communion every day from that time on."

Then came surrender and imprisonment for all. They were first taken to Segorbe, then to Valencia. There followed a month of agony and torture -- and without the Eucharist! At the end of this period Teresa was set free but her family remained in prison. She was taken in by a family which had been evacuated from Teruel. Soon she encountered her Eucharistic Lord again. Yet more: she was given charge of taking Holy Communion to others. She made her rounds, carrying her Burden in a small box to designated homes and even to prisons. She came to be called "the Ciborium child."

On March 30th, 1939, Valencia was liberated and a new life opened up for Teresa. Immediately and swiftly she resumed her studies and began her work for a bachelor's degree. Then she started her studies in philosophy and literature in the same University of Valencia in November of 1941 and continued them through 1943 in Zaragoza where her family had moved. She took her final examination in September, 1945, and received her licentiate on May 13th of the following year.

Teresa's studies were brilliant. She drew many of her peers and even her professors, exercising an irresistible spiritual influence upon them. One who knew her well at this time testifies: "Her university career was an aqueduct opening into the apostolate." Professors, university students, institutes, colleges, all opened their doors to her and she



penetrated deeply. She enjoyed a similar relationship with younger boys and girls, children, the elderly. Her open friendliness, her penetrating glance so fascinating and so charged with life, appeared to them as simply an interesting experience. Then before they knew what was happening she reached an intimacy with them. They found it easy to open their hearts to this new friend, who seemed to be able to find solutions for all their problems, and whose horizons were broad enough to include their loftiest ambitions.

During her years as a university student Teresa worked out a definitive plan of total surrender to the Lord. The Teresian Institute, where she had made her studies for her bachelor's degree in Teruel and Valencia, and the Opus Dei which her brother and sister had joined, attracted her attention. She was greatly interested in both, particularly the former. But she decided to remain independent, working within the framework of Catholic Action with complete dedication and with greater freedom for her life of prayer, already very deep. It may have been the life-style of some of the other young girls in her Catholic Action group which influenced her and led her to her final decision. In any event, for ten years, from 1945 to 1955, she was outstanding in the movement, totally surrendered to her own personal sanctification and to the works of the lay apostolate.

Teresa had worked as a promoter in Valencia; she became even more active in Zaragoza. Her fields of action had been the universities, institutes, colleges. In 1946 she was officially named Speaker for the Catholic Action groups in the Archdiocese of Zaragoza. It was here that she would give her full measure.

Her first preoccupation was to organize a school for propagandists. Courses insured a structured, systematized and permanent formation. But the immortal soul was for her the most important factor, and this she brought out clearly in all her classes and talks. Her zeal fired countless young girls; the influence perdured. Some of these girls became particularly intimate with Teresa, sharing more deeply in her way of life, her prayer, discussions held in her home, and in frequent trips.

To intensify propaganda and make it work, Teresa restructured the map of the diocese according to parishes. She promoted the nomination of parish propagandists, organizing cursillos, dialogues, retreats -- whatever type of meeting was required in order to reach everyone. She and her promoters did the circuit of the whole diocese, parish by parish. They organized weeks for young people, for mothers, and other more solemn gatherings and celebrations. She became a well-known figure throughout the diocese. Her human qualities, but still more the spirit which animated her, were extraordinary. Because of this her activity as a propagandist and a leader in formation had an enormous impact. Let us take a look at some of the reasons for her success.

The solid foundation of Teresa's doctrine, and the clarity and penetrating force with which she communicated it, formed a generation of totally responsible young girls: true Christians. They took their formation, with all its practical consequences, very seriously. Thus in their turn they could launch out into the apostolate in countless different ways. Teresa was sometimes accused of demanding too much. She answered, "It is not I who make the demands. I simply confront them with demanding situations." Christianity truly accepted and lived inevitably leads to holiness. Of all these young girls some, Teresa herself first, entered religious life. This is normal wherever the Christian life is intensely cultivated. But there were many who became exemplary mothers of families.



Teresa was also accused of fomenting enthusiasm for a life of virginity and by the same token of depreciating marriage. This was not the case. Actually, she spoke on marriage with such enthusiasm and unction that those who heard her were convinced that she must be in love herself and planning to marry soon. But whenever the occasion offered -- and this was frequent in the context of forming young girls -- and Teresa spoke on the religious life, vocation, surrender, consecrated virginity, her own passion for these themes would be roused, and she would move her hearers deeply. If the small seed of such a vocation were present in the heart of anyone listening to her, Teresa's words could activate it impetuously and decisively. Illusion might play a part in all this, as so frequently happens among overly eager and open young people. The following testimony shows Teresa as a former of strong souls.

"I met her as a propagandist giving a cursillo to the young girls of a Catholic Action group. She impressed me at first as a very simple person who gave herself to everyone in turn. On the supernatural level, however, she was unique. Contact with her challenged me to aim at the heights. Above all, her gaze radiated purity and depth. I can say in all truth that she changed my life. She guided me to God. In a word, she lifted my Christian life to a higher level. Later, in moments of great trial when I did not know how to respond to God's will with generosity, she, with a charity which led her to sacrifice time, energy and whatever else was needed, helped me to overcome all obstacles definitively. This was an excellent preparation for confronting the difficulties which were to come my way later. Her words, her life, were so convincing that you could not help realizing it all came from God. Near her, I felt safe.

"Our friendship became more intimate with the passing of time, and I was admitted into her family circle. Once when we were at the home of her Aunt Encarna, that dear and delightful collaborator of all her enterprises, her aunt disagreed with her on some point which escapes me now. Teresa responded somewhat brusquely. The next day she hesitated to go to Communion without first going to Confession. She asked her aunt's forgiveness with emotion and with great simplicity and sincerity. She said to her, 'Aunt, do you know what the priest said? He warned me not to be as pure as an angel and as proud as a devil.' There was an expression of pain on her face, and not content to tell her aunt only, she came to me also."

There is no need to insist on the charism inspiring her work as a promoter.

Everywhere she went she gave rise to waves of enthusiasm. She addressed girls in formation, organized activities for all classes of people, -- young boys, girls, parents, children. Priests too consulted her on many problems and questions. Such was the confidence her personality inspired. But her activity was not limited to the diocese of Zaragoza. It soon spread further abroad and she began receiving invitations from various groups, from priests and even from bishops, to speak or direct courses and weekly sessions and to intervene in more demanding and significant activities. By 1950 her engagements multiplied to overflowing. This was the Holy Year, and preparations for it increased her apostolic work. It was during this year that she was able to get away for a few days on pilgrimage to Rome. Of this we shall speak later.

We cannot give here the itinerary of her various trips throughout Spain. Perhaps it can never be reconstructed. The principle places she visited were Teruel, Palencia, Valladolid, Soria, Avila, Salamanca, Caceres, Valencia, Alicante. During a period of convalescence after her first surgical operation in Zaragoza in 1950 she spent a few days in Palencia with a friend of her family. This gave her an opportunity to establish contacts for apostolic works and to prepare the ground for later activities, especially for the Marian Year of 1954. A witness writes about this period:

'Many young people came from different parts of the diocese of Palencia. Young girls would gather around Teresa after each talk. To hear her speak changed one's life. It was at this time that she bound herself to an intense Marian focus at the Shrine of Pesquera, where a platform was improvised under a tree to take in the immensity of the great esplanade filled with people coming from the surrounding districts. Here she addressed the multitudes which were presided over by the bishop and a great number of priests and civil authorities. Teresa did this frequently in other places, always adapting herself to the special character of the locality."

Further notable activities were pursued in Penafiel, Aranda de Duero, Burgos de Osma. The year 1955 was extraordinarily full. This was the period immediately preceding Teresa's entrance into the cloister, and it seems that before the flash of fire turned inward it had to reach its maximum of vibration and expansion outwardly. Alcoy, Onteniente, Algemisi, Carcagente saw the flame pass by. It was in Onteniente that she met Don Basilio Sancho, a priest who would be of great assistance to her monastery in Olmedo. Here also she visited a hospital for tubercular patients and without fear of contagion spoke to them directly and simply. Then came Aranda de Duero and the Eucharistic Congress in Fuentes de San Esteban; next, Villamiel, Fuenteguinaldo, Ciudad Rodrigo. Still later there were more weekly meetings for young people and mothers. During these meetings Teresa organized nocturnal prayer vigils in spacious halls, usually the theatres of the place. Men of all ages joined these after work and listened to her talks, which usually developed into profound and gripping dialogues and discussions on serious questions. One priest was heard to say, "After these talks, I spend long hours in the confessional!"

We are now on the threshold of the Convent of Seville, where Teresa wanted to "hide her weakness in the power of God."

Translated by Sister Mary of the Holy Cross, OP  
Buffalo

THE FIRST CONSTITUTIONS OF THE DOMINICAN SISTERS OF MONTARGIS (1250)

Raymond Creytens, O.P.

The monastery of St. Dominic of Montargis (in the Department of Loiret, between Sens and Orleans) is well known in the history of the Dominican sisters of the 13th century. It owes its importance to the role that it played in the involvements which, in the course of the first half of the century, troubled the good relations between the sisters and the brothers of the Order of Preachers. The cause of this conflict is well known: namely, the ever-growing number of monasteries, either affiliated with or incorporated into the Order, threatened to paralyze the ministry of the brethren; hence, the efforts of these latter to get free from this charge, efforts which encountered the energetic resistance of the sisters. Let us briefly recall the principal phases of this struggle in which the monastery of Montargis played an active role.

At the death of St. Dominic, three monasteries were under the jurisdiction of the Order: Prouille, Madrid, and St. Sixtus of Rome. The two first had been founded by the holy Patriarch; the last was reformed and reorganized, by order of Honorius III, by St. Dominic with the help of the Dominican sisters of Prouille. In the course of the ensuing years, this number increased and soon formed a serious obstacle to the ministry of the brothers. A reaction was not long in coming. The brothers insisted, and demanded, and finally succeeded, after many approaches towards their superiors in the Order and to the papal court, in getting themselves freed from the direction and the administration of the monasteries of sisters. This was October 25, 1239. The decree of Gregory IX threw the sisters into desolation. Nevertheless, overcome but not discouraged, they soon returned to the charge. The monastery of St. Sixtus, thanks to the papal favor that it enjoyed by reason of its origins, was the first to succeed in having itself reintegrated into the bosom of the Order. This was in 1244.

The others followed quickly, with Montargis at the head. At the end of 1244 and/or in the beginning of 1245, its foundress, Amicie de Montfort, addressed herself to the Pope and obtained by a bull of April 8, 1245, the official incorporation of the monastery into the Order. The breach had been made; the monasteries, one after the other, had recourse to the Holy See with full success. On May 7 of that same year, St. Agnes of Strasbourg; on the 4th of the following July, Saint Mark of Strasbourg; and they were soon followed by a host of other monasteries which obtained the same concession. At the end of 1246, thirty or so monasteries were confided to the direction and to the care of the brothers. The sisters sang a song of victory. The brothers, for their part, tried first of all to attenuate the range of the bulls of incorporation by limiting the charges that they contained to the spiritual realm, and they did succeed in this plea. On April 4, 1246, Innocent IV excused them from the administration of the temporal affairs.

Did the brothers try to apply at Montargis the interpretive bull of April 4, 1246? This is very probable, because on October 12 of the following year, the sisters had confirmed by the Pope the privilege of incorporation of April 8, 1245. This state of affairs remained until September 26, 1252, where the sisters lost, in a single blow, everything they had won. In effect, a bull of Innocent IV, dated on this day, completely exonerated the brothers from the "cura monialium", the care of the nuns, with the exceptions of the monasteries of Prouille and of St. Sixtus. This measure brought with it unfortunate



consequences for the discipline and the administration of the monasteries. The sisters of Montargis complained bitterly about this to the Pope in a supplication that they addressed to him in the end of 1256. No doubt the sisters exaggerated, because it seems that they had not suffered from this decree of separation. A letter that Humbert of Romans, provincial of France, sent them in December of 1253 showed him occupied with the government of the monastery. Their procedure had rather as its goal the sanctioning by the Pope of a de facto situation. One will soon understand their apprehension.

Soon after the decree of separation of 1252, the sisters began again their entreaties with Pope Innocent IV. He, whose policies towards the sisters was fluctuating, found himself in an impasse. He got out of this by giving an order to the Dominican cardinal, Hugh of St. Cher, on February 18, 1254, to settle this delicate question. The cardinal was a friend of the sisters. Hence the question was resolved in their favor. In a short time most of the monasteries came back again under the jurisdiction of the Order, at least provisionally until the cardinal was able to conclude a definitive agreement with the Master General. Montargis was, no doubt, among the privileged monasteries. But this provisory state did not satisfy the sisters of Montargis. Were they afraid of disagreeable surprises on the part of the Order, or had they run out of patience? In any case, they did not wait for the definitive decision of the Order. While deliberations were still going on, they went to the Pope and asked for the definitive incorporation into the Order, which Alexander IV conceded to them on January 23, 1257. Thus was ended, at least for Montargis, the struggle to belong to the Order. For the other monasteries, too, the matter did not drag on. In 1259 all the monasteries that had formerly been committed to the direction of the brothers came back under the jurisdiction of the Order. Finally, Clement IV by his bull of February 6, 1267, put an end to the long quarrel and regulated, once and for all, the juridical status of the Dominican sisters.

One would like to know the origins and the internal organization of the monastery of Montargis, which in the course of this struggle had shown itself to be so deeply attached to the Order. This ardent love was owed by the sisters in the first place to their foundress, the Countess of Joigny, Amicie de Montfort, daughter of Simon de Montfort and of Alix de Montmorency. The profound friendship which linked St. Dominic to the Count of Montfort is well known. Amicie inherited this affection to the point, we are told by the anonymous author of the little Chronicle of the Order which was written towards 1260, that she encouraged her son to enter the Order: "Amicie de Joigny, a woman of a great name and a holy woman, many times wished that her only son, who was of excellent demeanor, would enter the Order if the brothers should wish. And when he came to his last moments, he, while in the army of the king of the French on Cyprus, did take our habit and became a brother." The chronicler adds: "She also, as she herself said, because she was not a man had not been able to be a brother, but in order that she might be at least a sister, created the house of the sisters of Montargis and endowed it well, in which a number of fifty sisters was established who flourished with a special prerogative of holiness and religion in France, and it is among them that she rests buried. She was of such fervor and of such heart in the promoting of the aforesaid house that when, because of the opposition of many of the brothers, she had not been able to have the permission to construct it in any way from the Order, in her own person she went many times to the papal



court and obtained the most efficacious letters to bring about her desire."

This is all that is known on the origin and the first times of the monastery of Montargis. Outside this little Chronicle of the Order, we know of no ancient or contemporary source which adds the slightest detail as to the foundation, or as to the first internal organization of the monastery.

In the 18th century, there still existed at Montargis a chronicle of the monastery which included a history of its first origins. The authors of the work "Gallia Christiana" knew of this and used it in their note on the monastery of Montargis. This chronicle appears today to be lost. Some extracts of it are kept in the collection A of the general archives of the Order in Rome, in which we have the following passages which refer to the origins of the monastery:

"Amicie, this pious lady, finding herself free after the loss she underwent of the Count of Joigny, her husband, and since the place of her chapel where St. Dominic had preached belonged to her, she gathered together there a number of young ladies of the best houses to live there devoutly. She gave funds for their subsistence and had made for them small lodgings each one separate from the other, which consisted of a little house between a court and a garden which was very suitable. She caused to be built a beautiful church and she had made a large enclosure surrounded with walls, and still not being satisfied with what she had done, which consisted of a group of, so to speak, "canonesses" with proof of nobility, she wished subsequently to place them in the Order of St. Dominic."

It is not easy to distinguish in this narration the part played by legend and the part of truth. The elements to decide this are lacking and history says nothing on the author of the Chronicles, nor on the date of its drawing up. But legendary elements are certainly not lacking in it. We read in fact, in this same narration, that the foundation of the monastery goes back to the years 1207 or thereabouts. This date is, no doubt, connected with the legend according to which St. Dominic, at the time of his first trip to France, preached in a chapel of the region which one believes to be situated at the outskirts of Montargis, at the gates of Montargis, in the parish of Amilly. One would no doubt be much closer to the truth if one were to place the foundation at about 1245, soon before the incorporation of the monastery into the Order. A woman as influential as Amicie certainly did not wait a long time before bearing the cause of incorporation before the Pope once the superiors of the Order had refused her.

On the other hand, one can also suppose that Amicie, given her relations with the Order, soon made a demand, a petition, to the brothers soon after, if not during the very foundation of the monastery. The author of this little Chronicle says that she founded the monastery to create for herself a spiritual retreat where she could lead a Dominican life. According to the author of this Chronicle, we would even have to admit that she founded the monastery at the time that she was taking steps with the papal court to obtain its incorporation into the Order, but perhaps the chronicler mixes together, or confuses, the events. It follows from the bull of Innocent IV of April 8, 1245, that at the time of this petition, the monastery was already regularly constituted.

This is what we know about the origins of the monastery. Historians add that the foundress, Amicie of Montfort, fixed at fifty the number of religious. This is an error of interpretation of the text of the little Chronicle of the Order. One knows from the letter of Humbert of Romans that in December of 1253, the monastery numbered only forty-five religious, and it was only at this time that the provincial fixed at fifty the maximum number of religious.

## THE CONSTITUTIONS OF THE SISTERS OF MONTARGIS

The author of the little Chronicle of the Order has a beautiful eulogy of the religious life of the monastery of Montargis about which he says that: "The sisters shone in France with the special prerogative of sanctity and religion." The time is about 1260, soon after the crisis of the sisters and a few years after their incorporation into the Order. Montargis became then, in short order, a place of sanctity and intense religious life. Amicie, that "woman of a great name and that holy woman", contributed, no doubt, to this in a great part, but one must look for the principal reason for this to the excellency of the constitutions, which have been preserved for us and which are the object of the present study.

The catalogue of the manuscripts of the royal Library of The Hague indicates to us under the heading 70 H 66 the following works: 1) *Consuetudines sororum ordinis Praedicatorum*, 1253 and 1256, pp. 1-19v; 2) The Rule of St. Augustine with the commentary of Hugh of St. Victor, pp. 20-76. The manuscript, according to the description given of it, was written in France around 1300, on parchment, and comprises seventy-six pages. It belonged formerly to N.J. Foucault (1643-1721), and was bought by the Library in 1828. The collection is composed of two distinct parts bound together at a date which is not given.

In another place in the catalogue, the author comes back to the first part of the manuscript with the words: "Statuta sororum ordinis Praedicatorum (of the monastery of the Dominican sisters of Montargis, 1253 and 1256), pp. 1-19; on parchment; around 1256; written in France probably at Montargis; with decorated initials; and belonging formerly to De (?) Beaussefaict and Laroche-Souville.

Let us complete this description by several other more precise notes. The constitutions of the sisters occupy in the manuscript pp. 1<sup>r</sup> to 18<sup>r</sup>. Here is the beginning: "Quoniam ex precepto regule iubentur sorores nostre habere cor unum et animam unam...Expl. sicut et fratres ordinis studeatis eas diligenter et fideliter observare ad laudem et gloriam Jesu Christi qui est benedictus in secula seculorum, amen. Commemoratio fratrum, sororum, familiarium benefactorum defunctorum ordinis nostri." To the constitutions there is joined a letter of which these are the beginning and ending words: "Devotis ancillis Christi, priorisse et sororibus beati dominici de monte argi, frater humbertus fratrum predicatorum in francia prior indignus celestium plenitudinem gratiarum. Notum vobis fieri volumus...ne locus alicui antequam vacet aliquatenus concedatur. Actum anno domini millesimo ducentesimo quinquagesimo tercio, mense decembri." In this letter, unpublished so far as I know, Humbert of Romans fixes the monastery of Montargis, which is subject to him as provincial of France, the maximum number of religious: fifty, and determines the revenues which the sisters shall dispose of. He subsequently forbids under pain of nullity that any postulant be admitted who does not fulfill the conditions prescribed in his letter. Finally, he commands that his ordinations be placed at the head of the constitutions, in order that no one be able to invoke in his defense ignorance of the law.

The letter permits us to identify these constitutions with the statutes of Montargis. Otherwise, how are we to explain the presence of the letter of Humbert at the end of these constitutions? It is certain, moreover, that these statutes were composed for sisters of the province of France. In the prologue, as at the end of the constitutions, it is expressly stated that the



sisters belong to the jurisdiction of the provincial of France. But in 1253, Montargis was the only monastery in France incorporated into the Order. There is thus no possible doubt on the origin of the statutes which the manuscript of the Hague preserves for us.

#### THE PLACE AND IMPORTANCE OF THE CONSTITUTIONS OF MONTARGIS IN THE HISTORY OF DOMINICAN LEGISLATION

The constitutions of the sisters of Montargis occupy in the history of the legislation of the sisters a quite special place. Up until now historians connected the official constitutions of Humbert of 1259 with the statutes of Prouille and of St. Sixtus without suspecting the existence of an intermediary form. The truth is quite otherwise, as we hope to prove in what follows. First of all, let us try to determine the age of our constitutions. The following ordinance which one finds in them will supply us with the means.

"Statuimus insuper ut si contingat de cetero aliquas consuetudines que monialibus competunt in predicto ordine (i.e. Praedicatorum) confirmari, magister ordinis vel prior provincialis Francie qui pro tempore fuerint, eas vobis non differant exhiberi, quas vos etiam cum humilitate et devotione suscipientes sicut et fratres ordinis studeatis eas diligenter et fideliter observare" (We ordained, moreover, that if it should come about that any constitutions which apply to nuns should be confirmed in the aforesaid Order (i.e., of Preachers), the Master of the Order, or the prior provincial of France of the time, will not delay to show them to you. And receiving them with humility and devotion, may you strive to follow them and observe them diligently and faithfully, just as the brothers of the Order do).

The constitutions of the sisters follow then closely those of the brothers. The ordinances which have become constitutions by the approbation of three consecutive General Chapters have the force of law for the sisters in proportion, it goes without saying, as they are applicable to their state and their condition. This will be the case generally of those constitutions which regulate the internal organization of the convent or the monastery, or of those concerned with liturgy and monastic observances. Taking into account this prescription, it will not be hard to date the statutes preserved in the Hague manuscript. The statutes contain the constitutions promulgated in the General Chapters of 1249, 1248, and the preceding years. But none, on the contrary, from the years 1250 and following. In their actual form, the statutes of Montargis represent then the legislation in vigor in the monastery around 1250 or, more exactly, from 1249 to 1251. We do not place them between 1249 and 1250, because in this last year the General Chapter of London made no law which was applicable to the sisters. The "terminus before which", 1251, on the contrary, is certain since several "constitutions" of this year were also concerned with the sisters, and yet they have not been inserted in their constitutions.

We have then fixed the place of the statutes of Montargis in the history of the legislation of the sisters. Chronologically, they are situated between the constitutions of St. Sixtus and those of Humbert of Romans promulgated officially at the General Chapter of Valenciennes in 1259. It remains for us to determine their place in the development of the legislation of the sisters.

The history of this legislation begins with the constitutions of the monastery of Prouille. These were drawn up by St. Dominic with elements borrowed, it is commonly said, from the statutes of Prémontré. No copy has been

preserved for us. One can only be sorry about this, because they no doubt showed many resemblances with the first statutes of the brothers composed by St. Dominic in 1216. With the help of these constitutions of the sisters, one would have been able to reconstitute to a great extent the first legislation of St. Dominic for the brothers, because this last also is no longer in existence, at least in its original form. But the historians of the Order did not think that the loss of the statutes of Prouille to be as serious as we imagine. According to them, these statutes were integrally preserved in the rule of St. Sixtus of Rome, which fundamentally is only an extrinsic name for the constitutions of Prouille. The sisters of the latter monastery, called to Rome by St. Dominic in order to reform there under his direction the monastery of St. Sixtus where the religious of St. Mary's in Tempulo and of St. Bibiana had withdrawn under order of Honorius III, brought their rule and introduced it into the monastery and gave it the name of the place: Rule of St. Sixtus.

This traditional thesis calls for many reservations. One can easily believe that the sisters of Prouille, in reforming the monastery, introduced there their manner of life and organized the monastery according to their monastic observances. But did they impose their rule without any adaptation? This is not very probable. A reform is a delicate matter, and one does not overturn with no adieu the manner of living of a monastery which is in conformity, at least in part, with the religious spirit. Why should one change or suppress laudable customs when these are not contrary to the spirit of the new rule? It seems to us to be more in keeping with good sense and prudence to admit that the sisters of Prouille absorbed into the rule of St. Sixtus everything which in the old rule of the sisters of St. Mary in Tempulo was compatible with their monastic ideal. There are, moreover, in the rule of St. Sixtus enough indications which are in favor of this opinion. One is referred back to the rule of St. Benedict: "prout regula Sancti Benedicti permittit" (as the rule of St. Benedict permits); to the Usages of Citeaux: "prout in cisterciensi ordine fieri consuevit" (as is customarily carried out in the Cistercian Order). These observations certainly do not come from the constitutions of Prémontré. Elsewhere there are literal borrowings from the statutes of the Order of the Gilbertines of Sempringham, whom Honorius III had previously asked to care for the church of St. Sixtus. It seems, consequently, difficult to maintain the traditional thesis: namely, that the rule of St. Sixtus is equated with the rule of Prouille. Rather, we are confronted with a new rule where the constitutions of Prouille occupy, perhaps, an important place, but not exclusively so; several elements of the old rule of the sisters of Rome have been mingled with it as integral parts. It will, therefore, not be easy to start out and discern in the rule of St. Sixtus the primitive basis which derives from Prouille. And this, of course, would be always supposing that the rule of St. Sixtus that we know today is indeed the rule in its original form. It is not impossible that the text of the rule may have undergone in the course of the first years, at least until its approbation by Gregory IX before 1232, some modifications which would bring us even farther from the primitive form of the rule of Prouille.

The rule of St. Sixtus constitutes, then, for practical purposes, the point of departure in this history of the legislation of Dominican sisters. It is soon going to lose its specifically Dominican character. When one studies the founding of the greater number of the monasteries of the 13th century, one notices that the Popes in approving foundations often imposed



upon them the rule of "the Order" of the nuns of St. Sixtus of Rome, "ordinis monialium Sancti Sixti de Urbe". No allusion is made to the Order of Friars Preachers, nor to their constitutions. The rule of St. Sixtus, no doubt Dominican in its origins, becomes a form of religious life officially recognized by the Church, a rule-type for nuns, side by side with that of the Cistercians and that of Gregory IX (drawn up for the nuns of Italy when the Pope was still a cardinal). It is a universal rule without direct connections with any particular religious order, which creates among the canonesses of St. Augustine a special order: the Order of the Nuns of St. Sixtus of Rome. In this "order" there will be the possibility of distinguishing several congregations which, outside of the fact of the rule of St. Sixtus, have no connection with one another. Let us give a concrete example, using the rule of St. Augustine. All the religious orders, which have taken the rule of St. Augustine as the basis of their legislation, belong by this very fact to the "Order of St. Augustine". But this does not prevent them from being distinct institutes. The rule of St. Augustine, being fundamentally only a general form of life, it was necessary to complete it by special constitutions which corresponded to the aim and to the special type of apostolate that the different religious orders had set out for themselves. In this way one finds in the family of the Order of St. Augustine several religious orders, which outside of the rule had little or nothing in common. The same is true of the rule of St. Sixtus. All the monasteries, which adopted it as a legal basis of their institute, belong by that very fact to the "Order of St. Sixtus of Rome". Comparable to the religious of the "Order of St. Augustine", the sisters of the "Order of St. Sixtus" completed, subsequently, the common rule with statutes or constitutions which were special, and distinguished them from one another. The statutes of the sisters were not as varied as those introduced into the different orders of men religious. The nuns remain still nuns, that is, separated from the world, and they did not have the vast field of apostolate which necessitated the multiplicity and the variety that came about in the orders of men religious. But as to the internal organization of the monastery, it was possible to have quite a good deal of differences in the statutes brought about by local conditions or social conditions in the different monasteries. Thus, the sisters of the Order of Penitents of St. Mary Magdalene in Germany, while following the rule of St. Sixtus, adopted, over and above, special constitutions appropriate for their special vocation.

But one should not err about these "additional statutes". It has been thought (by Father M.H. Vicaire, O.P., for example) that these additions or changes were introduced into the rule of St. Sixtus just in the same way that new ordinations were inserted into the constitutions of religious orders. But things did not take place in this way; the rule of St. Sixtus was something invariable, just as the rule of St. Augustine. Although conceived in its beginnings as a book of constitutions, it became, by the will of Gregory IX, a canonized text to which it was no longer permitted to add the slightest change, anymore than to the rule of St. Augustine. When, then, the sisters adopted the rule of St. Sixtus, there was not a question of making any changes in it, because such a point of the rule was ill-fitted for their monastic idea or was contrary to the customs or social conditions of the place. But there was necessary, on the other hand, to have a rule of conduct that would be precise and clearly delineated. This is what one hoped to obtain, thanks to a new body of statutes which would be the legislative complement of the rule.

What was the monastery which first created such a code? Was it St. Sixtus of Rome? Perhaps. In 1232, Gregory IX imposes upon the Penitents of St. Mary Magdalene the rule of St. Sixtus, and everything leads one to believe that these statutes or constitutions that they adopted at this time come from the Roman monastery. This code has been preserved for us. It is clearly Dominican in origin, nearly all its prescriptions having been borrowed literally from the constitutions of the Friars Preachers in the form that these had before 1236. But since it is certain that the Penitents were not under the jurisdiction of the Order, it is not probable that these statutes were drawn up for them. The Penitents have borrowed them, no doubt (while bringing in certain modifications of their own), from a Dominican monastery, perhaps St. Sixtus of Rome whose rule they had adopted. These statutes are, in any case, very old, certainly from before 1236, and in their original state perhaps from 1230 or thereabouts. They can be considered, consequently, as a typical example of constitutions complementing the rule of St. Sixtus.

But it was not only to supply for the insufficiencies of the rule that the monasteries introduced this body of new statutes. The very clearly Dominican character of these latter reveals the profound reason. The sisters wished to conform themselves to the life of the Friars Preachers, to make themselves Dominicans. The rule of St. Sixtus was not enough. It was necessary, by adding certain complements proper to this end (namely, to give the rule Dominican character), to make of it a norm of life according to the spirit of St. Dominic without at the same time sacrificing the legal basis of the institution. The monastery had been approved as living according to the rule of the "Order of St. Sixtus", and as long as it was not officially incorporated into a religious order, it was obligated to hold to it. Hence, one kept the rule of St. Sixtus, but one added to it a new regulation, complementary statutes. As far as possible, one even kept certain parts of the rule of St. Sixtus. Hence, one keeps in the statutes of the Penitents references back to certain chapters of the rule of St. Sixtus which one thought opportune to preserve. But the center of gravity has passed from the rule to the new body of constitutions. From day to day, the former gradually loses its practical importance to become soon completely eclipsed. The final stroke comes with the incorporation of the monasteries into the Order. The rule loses its reason for being, the sisters belonging now no longer to the "Order of the Nuns of St. Sixtus of Rome", but to the Order of Friars Preachers". Henceforth, the sisters will be ruled by the constitutions of the Friars Preachers adapted to the needs of the sisters. In the bulls of incorporation, which came out from 1245 on, Innocent IV no longer speaks of the rule of St. Sixtus; he imposes upon the superiors of the Order that they should furnish the Dominican monasteries with a rule modeled on their own constitutions.

This juridical innovation did not carry with it any great practical changes in the legislation of the sisters. Well before the incorporation, the sisters were already living according to the constitutions of the Friars Preachers, because their complementary statutes were a pure and simple adaptation of the legislation of the brothers in vigor under Jordan of Saxony. Hence, it sufficed to eliminate the rule of St. Sixtus, and to substitute for it the statutes which, by this fact, became the legal base of the institutue. At least this is the way that several monasteries, among others those of Germany, interpreted the bulls which incorporated them into the Order. They continued to live according to their former legislation. This state of



affairs lasted until 1259. On this date Humbert of Romans abolished all the existing constitutions and replaced them by others which he imposed upon all the monasteries subject to the jurisdiction of the Order. We shall soon come back to this point.

Things took place in quite another way in France. Montargis, incorporated into the Order in 1245, immediately had itself given constitutions that were conformable to the new state of the legislation of the brothers. In 1241, the old constitutions, which had served as a model for the statutes of the sisters of Germany, had been replaced by a new body of statutes, the work of Raymond of Penafort. Hence, it is natural that the sisters of Montargis took the modern constitutions as the base for their legislation. One understands that the monasteries of Germany should have kept, even after their incorporation, their previous legislation because it pre-existed to the drawing-up of Raymond of Penafort. But Montargis, according to all appearances, never had any other legislation. It seems, indeed, that its foundation goes back to the thereabouts of 1245, that is, to the time of the incorporation which gave it a right to the constitutions of the brothers.

The text of the constitutions of Montargis, which the Hague manuscript preserves for us, probably does not represent the original form of the legislation of the monastery. It dates, as we saw, from the years 1250, and contains the ordinances of the General Chapters from 1245 to 1250. Humbert of Romans is probably its author. In 1245, he was the provincial of France and, as such, it was up to him to organize and direct the monastery. We know that he was much interested in the legislation of the brothers, as well as that of the sisters. In 1256, he promulgated the statutes of the brothers; and in 1259, the official constitutions of the sisters. The fact that the constitutions of Montargis served as a basis for these latter renders his paternity, thereof, even more probable.

Important though they may be, these constitutions did not have a broad diffusion. It is indeed stated in the text that the Master General has approved them, but there is no sign that John the Teutonic, Master from 1241 to 1252, considered them as obligatory for all the monasteries of the Order, as was the case with those of Humbert in 1259. They were limited to the territory of the province of France. In the other provinces, for example in that of Germany, one continued to follow the old statutes without being concerned about the innovations of Montargis. We have the proof of this in the "Admonitions" of the provincial of Germany addressed to the sisters of his province. It is stated there: "Indeed, since in the new constitutions there is not made any mention of the mode of life of these (namely, the lay brothers), let there be kept what was ordained in the old constitutions under the first Master John." The "first Master John" is John the Teutonic - by opposition to John of Vercelli (1264-1284) - and the new constitutions are those of Humbert of Romans of 1259. By "old constitutions" one certainly means neither the constitutions of St. Sixtus nor those of Montargis, whose drawing up falls under the government of the Master General (1241-1251). Nowhere in these statutes, nor indeed in those of Humbert, does one speak of lay brothers affiliated with the monasteries, as is the question in the "Admonitions" mentioned above. It does not seem, either, that these were constitutions composed by John the Teutonic in person, because there is no documentary evidence that the Master General had produced such a work. The old statutes in vigor under John the Teutonic are, no doubt, the old constitutions which the sisters professed when they were still under the rule of St. Sixtus, but which, subsequent

to the incorporation, had become a unique and official rule. Perhaps the authentic form, thereof, is preserved in the statutes of the Penitents of St. Mary Magdalene. There, in any case, one finds a special chapter on the lay brothers, which contains concrete prescriptions on their duties and their obligations in the monastery. If there were differences between the old rule of Germany and the statutes of the Penitents, they would be, no doubt, only on secondary points. The monasteries of Germany, affiliated or incorporated into the Order, certainly followed a Dominican rule, identical in substance with the statutes of the Penitents, since there is no resemblance to the constitutions of Montargis. Outside these two typical legislations modeled on the constitutions of the brothers from 1228 to 1236 and 1241, there was no Dominican rule.

One can ask, nevertheless, if the rule of Germany, about which the "Admonitions" speak, was uniform for all the monasteries of the province. The problem is not easy to resolve, since all these constitutions have perished. Certain indications cause one to lean rather towards the negative. At St. Mark of Strasbourg, one had proper constitutions called "constitutions of St. Mark", no doubt because they differed from those in vigor in other monasteries. This cannot be the "old rule", neither more nor less, which we were speaking about above. In such a case, one would not have made a distinction between the monasteries which followed the rule of St. Mark and those which did not. A second indication is the following: Humbert of Romans, having become Master General of the Order in 1254, speaks of a multiplicity and a variety of constitutions; would he have in mind only the two legislative codes preserved, one of them in the statutes of the Penitents, the other in those of Montargis? One would be closer to the truth, we think, if one were to admit that several monasteries, or groups of monasteries, had acquired for themselves, through their provincials, constitutions which were proper in this sense that one added certain particular ordinances to the common legal base whose substantive form is retained in the statutes of the Penitents.

Whatever may be the truth as to this last point, Humbert deemed the state of affairs sufficiently annoying and harmful to the good government of the sisters to consider necessary the unification of their constitutions. And here begins the third and final phase in the evolution of the legislation of the sisters. On August 27, 1257, Humbert caused himself to be given by the Pope the order to elaborate new constitutions that would be obligatory for all the monasteries subject to the jurisdiction of the Order. The task was not a difficult one. Humbert took as his basis the constitutions of Montargis and changed certain things there which were necessitated by the universal character of the new rule, and the following year this was ready. His promulgation of the sole and official law took place at the General Chapter of Valenciennes in 1259.

The legislation of the sisters thus was definitively fixed. Under pain of being excluded from the Order, the Dominican monasteries were to abandon henceforth their old rules or constitutions and conform their life to the new statutes. The ideal was a beautiful one, but its realization ran into practical difficulties. One soon saw that the new rule, precisely because of its universal character, was too general on certain points and too imprecise on others, or did not take sufficiently into account the social conditions of the different monasteries. This point could not escape Master Humbert who, being wise and prudent, allowed the provincials to introduce into the monasteries



subject to their jurisdiction a series of ordinations, the "Admonitiones", which would regulate down to the details the life of the religious. These "Admonitiones" were not properly speaking new constitutions, anymore than the "Declarationes" in the legislation of the brothers of which they were the counterpart; and, indeed, hence one carefully avoided calling them such. But they were, nonetheless, a supplementary law and the equivalent to the statutes such as one had invented long before to make explicit, or complete, the old rule of St. Sixtus.

However, they differ from these latter, since the "Admonitions" never took shape as a juridical corpus capable of one day replacing the official rule of Humbert. They were too particularized for that, limited as they were to a determined province and, consequently, without a universal range. Such an eventuality was, in any case, excluded by the fact that the rule of Humbert fully satisfied the desire the sisters had to conform themselves in everything to the life of the brothers, a desire and a tendency which were at the root of the first complementary statutes made to the rule of St. Sixtus.

Hence was completed the evolution of the legislation of the sisters. The following schema will allow us to indicate the important place that the constitutions of Montargis hold therein (the schema of the author, revised and with added comments, will be found on p. 87)

#### THE CONSTITUTIONS OF MONTARGIS AND THE OFFICIAL RULE OF 1259

We have stated above that the constitutions of Montargis are at the basis of the legislation which was imposed in 1259 by Master Humbert upon all the monasteries subject to the jurisdiction of the Order. In order to convince oneself of this it suffices to place the two legislations side by side: that of 1259 is manifestly drawn up on the model of Montargis, and as a proof one has the identity of structure and, above all, the literal identity of the greater part of the chapters which are common to the two codes. H. Grundmann was the first to connect the official rule of the sisters with the constitutions of the Friars Preachers of 1256-1259, thus breaking with the tradition according to which the latter came directly from the rule of St. Sixtus. He remarked very correctly that there is a discontinuity between the rule of St. Sixtus and the new rule, whereas this latter shows a striking resemblance to the legislation of the brothers. But Mr. Grundmann did not know about the statutes of Montargis; otherwise he would have noticed that the passages of the official rule of 1259, which are concerned exclusively with sisters, came from the statutes of Montargis. The parts which are common to the official rule of the sisters and that of the brothers are likewise found in the rule of Montargis; and this is not astonishing because the rule of the brothers and that of Montargis derive from the same source: the constitutions of Raymond of Penafort.

This point having been cleared up, let us examine the divergences between the constitutions of Montargis and those of 1259. In effect, there is no point in pausing at the common points that would bring us, in view of their more or less complete identity, to a systematic exposition of the very legislation of the sisters which would overflow the limits of this study. What is important for us is to know what sense the legislation has evolved since 1245 and to discern the part of Humbert of Romans in the latter drawing up.

Among the differences, one must note first of all the five new chapters which Humbert introduces in the official constitutions. They are the chapters: 1) On things in common; 2) On the middle fault; 3) On apostates; 4) On buildings; 5) On the granting of houses. These additions may be easily explained.

Since 1245 the monasteries had rapidly developed, and new other needs had become manifest, which a legislation such as that of Montargis, which was made for a monastery at its beginnings, could not foresee. Hence, the new prescriptions on the material organization of the monastery, and on the administration of the temporal, on the construction of buildings with everything having to do with this, such as the form of the parlors, of the grilles, etc. The tension which had come about in the latter years between the sisters and the brothers also called for measures of precaution in what had to do with the founding of new houses. One will not be surprised that Humbert has introduced into his rule a special chapter on apostates. His long experience must have taught him much on this point. The only surprising innovation is the change in the penal code. Why has he introduced the middle fault, distinct from the "light fault"? This distinction, proper to the statutes of Prémontré, had never been admitted by the legislators of the Order. Neither had Montargis adopted it in its statutes. This novelty is due probably to the influence of the old rule of the sisters; this latter distinguishes, in effect, the middle fault from the light fault, a rule distinction which one also finds in the rule of St. Sixtus.

There is also a second difference. The official rule no longer has a separate chapter on the lay sisters. One does not perceive the reason which has brought Humbert to eliminate this chapter from the rule of Montargis. This legislation was very old because it is found in the first constitutions of the brothers. Humbert has preferred to spread the prescriptions through different chapters, at least in part, because several have entirely disappeared from the new rule.

Other articles, with respect to the rule of Montargis, have undergone a radical transformation. Thus the article "On the manner of entering" has been completely worked over; in those which concerned the penal code, the order of faults is entirely changed. The differences are such that it is impossible to indicate even in a summary way the points of divergence. Other chapters, however, present only slight modifications, such as the omission or addition of a sentence; but from an historical point of view, they are worth being noted. First of all, the new rule no longer prescribes private prayers at the hour of rising; Montargis had introduced these in place of the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin that the brothers recited in the morning, but which the sisters were henceforth to recite in church. These prayers, nevertheless, are not definitively abolished; because one can still give oneself to her private devotions after Matins and Compline. In the chapter "On inclinations", the rule of 1259 prescribes a new genuflection: "at the beginning of the antiphon of the Blessed Virgin, which is said after Compline". One will note that the constitutions of the brothers of 1256 do not yet mention it. Let us also note the changes that Humbert brings to the chapters "On tonsure and the washing of the head". Instead of four times a year (as found in Montargis), the sisters will henceforth be able to have their hair cut seven times a year: on the days that the superior will determine. Although he is broader on this point, Humbert is, on the contrary, more severe on others: instead of fifteen times, the sisters will not be able to wash their heads except seven times.

Let us also note certain examples of this change of spirit in the new rule. At Montargis, postulants were accepted from the age of seven years on, and one could make profession at twelve. In the constitutions of 1259, one does not indicate a precise age for the postulants - it is enough that they be



not excessively young - and for profession one requires thirteen years of age. It is also interesting to note that Humbert sets aside the usage which existed at Montargis of having the sisters blessed by the bishop after their profession. This usage must be abolished, he states, because it is harmful to good understanding.

There remains a word to be said about the changes brought about in the chapters on faults. In the new rule the enumeration and the description of the faults is more precise and more logical. One notes also certain new faults in the chapters on light, medium, or grave faults. At first sight, one would think that to be fairly numerous, but that is not the case. Several of these new faults are already in the statutes of Montargis, but under other headings, for example, in the chapter "On clothing". Humbert has placed them in the chapters on faults, where they are in their proper place.

These are, more or less, the important innovations that Humbert of Romans introduced in the legislation of 1259. They are not very numerous when one compares the common basis of the two legislations, but one will still consider them with interest, because they show in what spirit the legislation of the Dominican sisters evolved.

#### THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CONSTITUTIONS OF MONTARGIS IN RECONSTITUTING THE FIRST TEXT OF THE LEGISLATION OF RAYMOND OF PENAFORT

The constitutions of Raymond of Penafort, published by Father H. Denifle, do not represent the original text of the official legislation of 1241. Father Denifle disengaged them from the constitutions of Humbert of Romans by eliminating all additions subsequent to 1241, but all he obtained in this way was the substantial basis of the constitutions of Raymond of Penafort. The weak point of this method was that one does not arrive in this way at fixing the first reading of the old ordinances which had just been replaced by those which were defined in the General Chapters of 1242 to 1256. The acts of the Chapter do not suffice, either, to fill in this void, because in them one often indicates only the two or three first words of the old legislative text. One could have recourse to the constitutions in vigor of Jordan of Saxony, to which the texts of St. Raymond showed a great deal of resemblance. But this method, although legitimate on the whole, was not applicable to details. Thanks to the constitutions of Montargis one will henceforth be able to affirm with certitude that such and such a particular ordination of the old rule has been carefully preserved in the rule of Raymond of Penafort from which the legislation of the sisters of Montargis derives in direct line. If, then, a legislative text of the old rule is found in the statutes of Montargis, it is because it was also in the constitutions of St. Raymond. Hence, in the chapter of light faults, the constitutions of the brothers of 1256 state: "clamatis vel proclamantibus se de supradictis, detur penitentia secundum quod prelato videbitur expedire" (To those who are proclaimed, or who proclaim themselves, concerning the aforesaid, a penance is given as will seem fit to the prelate). This constitution, which dates from 1251, is subsequent to the drawing-up of the statutes of Montargis. What did one say in place of it in those of St. Raymond? The old statutes, antecedent to the year 1241, say: "clamatis de supradictis et veniam petentibus iniungitur unus psalmus vel duo vel cum psalmo disciplina vel amplius secundum quod prelato videbitur expedire" (For those proclaimed concerning the aforesaid and seeking forgiveness, there is imposed one or two psalms, or with the psalm, the discipline or more,

according as it will seem fit to the prelate). The statutes of Montargis guarantee for us that this reading was kept in the rule of Raymond of Penafort where one reads at the end of the chapter on light faults: "clamat de supradictis et veniam petentibus iniungitur unus psalmus vel duo vel cum psalmo disciplina vel amplius secundum quod illi que preest videbitur expedire". Hence one has, duly attested, an authentic reading of the constitutions of Raymond of Penafort.

The statutes of Montargis are called to render still other services. We know that Raymond of Penafort has not always retained everywhere the text of the old constitutions. He has modified it in certain points and, above all, he has changed its disposition. Hence, one will not always obtain the primitive form of the rule of 1241 by substituting the text of the old rule to that one which was introduced later into the constitutions of the brothers of Humbert of Romans. For example, the constitutions of Humbert states with reference to sins of the flesh: "si quis autem, quod deus avertat, in peccatum carnis lapsus fuerit, ipsum non solum supradicta pena sed gravius puniendum censemus" (If anyone should fall, which God forbid, into a sin of the flesh, we consider that he should not only be punished with the aforesaid punishment, but more severely). This prescription comes at the end of the third paragraph on the graver fault and was introduced in its present form in the General Chapter of 1251.

But here is what one reads in the constitutions of before 1240, after the description of the penance due to "graver faults", and which is identical with that in the constitutions of Humbert: "eodem modo penitere debet qui rem sibi collatam receperit de his que prohibentur recipi; si collatam celaverit quod beatus Augustinus furti iudicio dicit esse condemnandum; vel si in peccatum carnis quis lapsus fuerit quod gravius ceteris puniri censemus" (In the same way, one should repent who receives something given to him of those things which it is forbidden to receive, and if he hides what he has received, which blessed Augustine says is to be condemned as theft; or, if anyone should have fallen into a sin of the flesh, which we consider to have to be more gravely punished than others). The transition "eodem modo penitere debet" (he should repent in the same way) is lacking, as one sees, with Humbert. On the other hand, when one examines the context, one sees that the two first faults enumerated in the old rule have been taken out of that place in the rule of 1256 and are found in the beginning of the chapter "On graver faults". What, then, was the text and the order in the constitutions of St. Raymond? Montargis, which is inspired from it, orders after the description of the grave fault: "eodem modo penitere debet si qua, quod absit, in peccatum carnis lapsa fuerit quod gravius ceteris puniri censemus et plus quam omni abominamur" (In the same way, one should do penance if she, which may it not happen, should have fallen into a sin of the flesh which we consider to merit a punishment more gravely than other sins and which we abominate more than all sins). As the statutes of Montargis derive from the constitutions of St. Raymond, their text represents approximately the authentic form of the rule of 1240. Hence one is practically certain that one read in the constitution of St. Raymond: "Non vocetur ad aliquod officium in ecclesia...Eodem modo penitere debet etc." (Let him not be called for any office in the church...in the same way, one should do penance, etc.).

To appreciate at its full value the strength of this argument, one must necessarily study it in the context of the legislation on grave faults in the three books of the constitutions. One will see by comparing the texts that



the statutes of Montargis reflect the original form of the constitutions of St. Raymond. Assuredly, one must apply this method of reconstitution with prudence and circumspection. The statutes of Montargis are an adaptation, not a pure and simple copy of the constitutions of Raymond of Penafort. But the danger of going astray is not as great as one might think. With few exceptions, the rule of Montargis faithfully follows the text of the legislation of 1241; one can then use it without fear to reconstitute in particular cases the original text of the constitutions of Raymond of Penafort.

Translated by Pierre Conway, O.P.

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SCHEMA of Development of the Constitutions of the Nuns

The Schema referred to on p. 82 was revised, and explanatory comments were added, by Mother Marie Rosaria of Summit (now of Cainta, Philippines), who first brought this paper to our attention. The revised Schema follows:

Rule of Prouille

absorbed into

Rule of St. Sixtus

completed by

Corpus of Statutes or Constitutions  
(type:statutes of Penitents)

continued as official  
Rule in monasteries  
of Germany until  
1259

Montargis (1245)  
model of  
official Const.  
(1259); Completed  
by Admonitions

Rule of St. Dominic

Rule of Const. of Friars  
Preachers (1228 - 1236)

recast

Const. of Raymond of  
Penafort (1241)

Const. of Humbert of Romans  
(1256-1259)

Declarations

Const. revised with com-  
mentary; Fr. Potton, OP (1864)  
for France

Constitutions  
Fr. Jandel, OP (1868)  
(essentially Fr. Potton's)

Constitutions  
Fr. Gillet, O.P. (1930)

Experimental Constitutions  
with ordinations  
Fr. Fernandez (1971)

1. The constitutions of Montargis and Humbert of the Romans differ considerably from the rule of San Sisto which absorbed the rule of Prouille drawn up by St. Dominic. It would seem that Raymond of Penafort, a canonist, was responsible for the changes. It has a more legalistic tone than the constitutions of San Sisto.
2. The Gillet constitutions of 1930 represent another major change when these constitutions were revised according to the Code of Canon Law.
3. The experimental constitutions issued by Father Aniceto Fernandez more faithfully reflect the spirit of St. Dominic. It is less legalistic than the Humbert or the Gillet constitutions.

In a sense  
Mary as Mother  
became the first "disciple" of her Son,  
the first to whom he seemed to say:  
"Follow me",  
even before he addressed this call  
to the Apostles  
or to anyone else.

REDEMPTORIS MATER, #20

## BOOK REVIEW

THE SWEET CALL OF THE TURTLEDOVE (Il soave richiamo della tortora) by Sister M. Giuseppina, OP, (Naples: Editrice Domenicana Italiana, 1987), 215 pages, L 15,000.

The author is a nun at Holy Rosary Monastery in Marino, Italy. She was a contributor to Contemplative Domenicane which was reviewed in the Feb. 1987 Conference Communications. Sister is on the editorial board for a bi-monthly newsletter for all the Italian Dominican Sisters (active and contemplative) and writes a "regular column" therein.

This book is a collection of 35 reflections on various aspects of our vocation. They were originally published separately in periodicals so there is some repetition. Sister, however, chose to leave them as originally written because the constant repetition of basic ideas is so much a part of the contemplative experience.

She candidly admits that Dominicans seem to be the least known of all cloistered nuns. Hence, the primary motive for the book is to present our cloistered contemplative life in the midst of the Church and the entire Dominican Family. She writes beautifully of the profound spiritual significance of silence, enclosure, prayer, etc. One chapter, entitled "In the Noon Time of Life", is a reflection upon her solemn profession. Another chapter offers spiritual insights for living enclosure in the midst of a hospital ward. Mary is often presented as a model for the contemplative life. Sister's deep love for the Dominican Family permeates every page.

The book is excellent for spiritual reading, meditation and reflection. The chapters could also be used as stimulating vocational material for those seeking a deeper understanding of our life.

I have two very minor suggestions or criticisms. First, given the author's background in the classics and philosophy I was surprised that she did not offer any insights on study. Our Constitutions place a special emphasis upon this basic element of the Dominican charism. Perhaps she is saving this topic for her next book! Second, the sentence structure is difficult to follow at times, causing difficulties for the translator.

This most welcome contribution to current literature on the Dominican cloistered life was published through the fraternal support of the Provinces of St. Mark and Sardinia, and Naples. It contains several color plates of frescoes at San Marco by Blessed Angelico and Ghirlandaio which add a visual warmth to our Sister's lovely work. May others be encouraged to join her in sharing the fruits of Dominican contemplation through writing. "These are pages that every nun could write because I believe each one does write them by her own life" (p. 10).

Sr. Mary Jeremiah, OP  
Lufkin, Texas





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